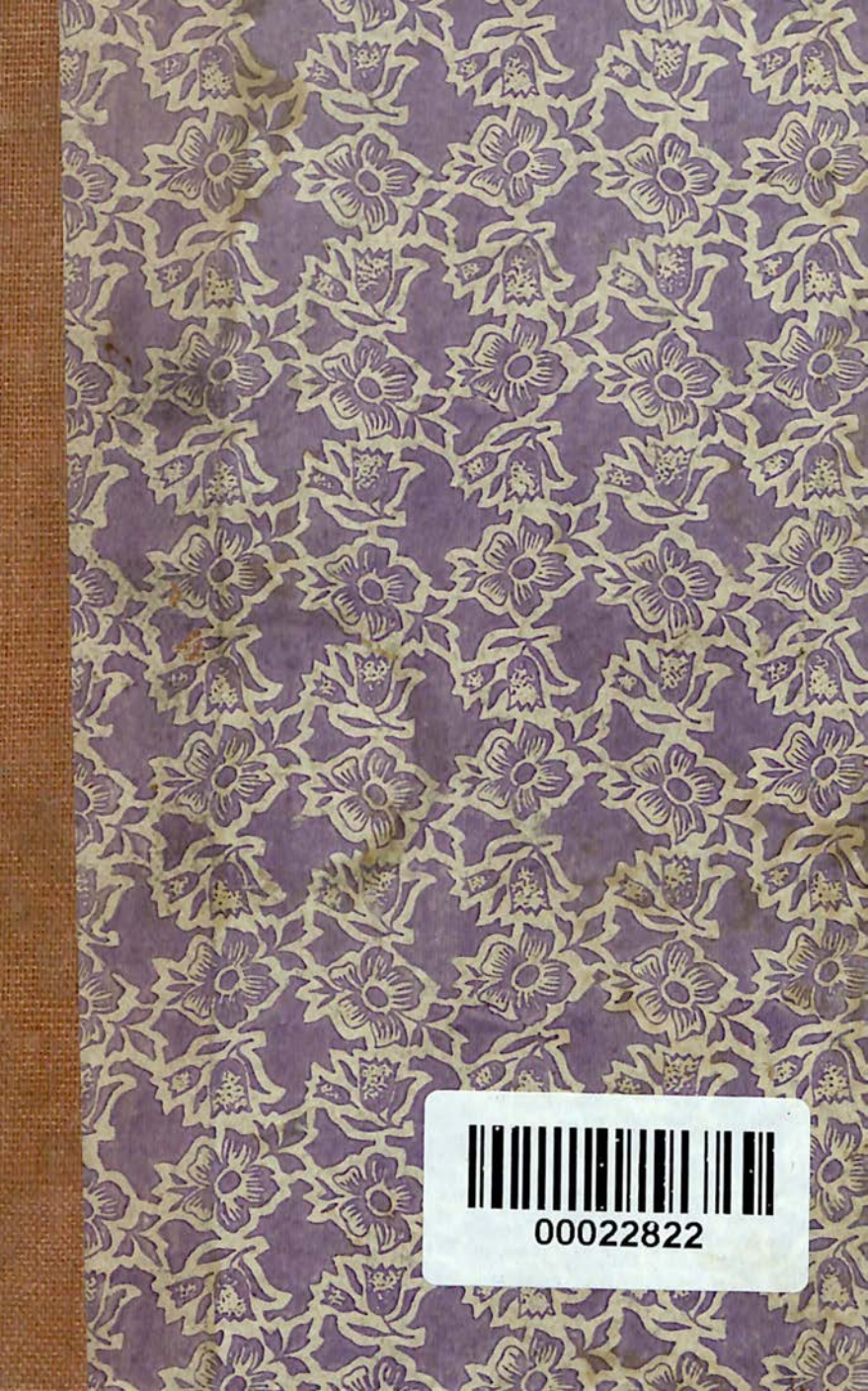

00022822

THE
ASIATIC SOCIETY OF BOMBAY
TOWN HALL, BOMBAY-400 001.

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 18 July, 2018

LIFE OF HERNANDO CORTES.

THE LIFE OF

HERNANDO CORTES.

BY ARTHUR HELPS,

AUTHOR OF THE "SPANISH CONQUEST IN AMERICA."

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

22822

LONDON:

BELL AND DALDY, YORK STREET,

COVENT GARDEN.

1871.

00022822

CHISWICK PRESS:—PRINTED BY WHITTINGHAM AND WILKINS,
TOOKS COURT, CHANCERY LANE.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER X.

Page

THE march to Tezcuco — Cortes surprizes Iztapalapa—Expedition round the Great Lake — Final preparations for the Siege of Mexico 1

CHAPTER XI.

The Spaniards and their allies commence the siege —Defeat of the Mexicans on the Lake—Mexico entirely invested—Council summoned by the Mexican king—Result of the first general attack —The various successes of Alvarado's division —Impatience of the soldiers—The second general attack—The Spaniards defeated . . 30

CHAPTER XII.

Consequences of the Defeat—The Siege languishes —Cortes sends aid to his Indian Allies—The Allies return to the Camp of Cortes—The Siege is pressed—The Mexicans will not treat with Cortes—Mexico is taken 96

CHAPTER XIII.

Page

State of Mexico after the Conquest—Thanksgiving for the Victory—Mexico rebuilt and repeopled —Christoval de Tapia sent to supersede Cortes —Revolt of Panuco—Cortes inhabits Mexico— Memorial of Conquistadores to the Emperor— Arrival of Franciscans 118

CHAPTER XIV.

The Expeditions sent out by Cortes to conquer and to colonize—The Expedition of Alvarado . 153

CHAPTER XV.

Other expeditions sent out by Cortes to conquer and to colonize—Expedition under Sandoval . 169

CHAPTER XVI.

The Dealings of Cortes with the Natives, as regards apportioning them to his Spaniards . . 176

CHAPTER XVII.

Christoval De Olid sent by Cortes to Honduras— his rebellion—Cortes goes to Honduras to chastise Christoval de Olid—Dissensions in Mexico during his Absence—Execution of the Kings of Mexico and Tlacuba—Return of Cortes to Mexico—Ponce de Leon comes to take a Residencia of Cortes 183

CHAPTER XVIII.

Page

The Residencia of Cortes—Death of Ponce de Leon —Confused state of the Government of Mexico—Ponce de Leon's instructions about encomiendas come to naught—Encomiendas allowed by the Spanish Court — An Audiencia created for Mexico—Instructions to this Audiencia do not vary the nature of encomiendas in New Spain 234

CHAPTER XIX.

Arrival of the Audiencia—Great Disputes between the Protectors of the Indians and the Audiencia —the Auditors prosecute the Bishop of Mexico —The Bishop excommunicates the Auditors— A great Junta in Spain on the subject of the Indies 251

CHAPTER XX.

The second Audiencia arrives in Mexico—Proceedings of the Auditors—The poverty of Cortes 266

CHAPTER XXI.

The Expeditions sent out by Cortes to the North of Mexico—Cortes returns to Spain—His grievances and troubles 278

HERNANDO CORTES.

CHAPTER X.

The march to Tezcuco—Surprizes Iztapalapa—Expedition round the Great Lake—Final preparations for the siege of Mexico.

HAVING so far prospered in all that he had planned against the devoted city of Mexico, Cortes started from Tlascala on the 28th of December, the Feast of the Innocents. There were three ways leading to Tezcuco; Cortes chose the most difficult one, thinking wisely that it would be the least protected. Ten thousand Tlascalans accompanied him. He met with very little opposition, and with none that needs recounting, on the way. When he approached the spot from which the whole province of Mexico could be seen, Cortes bade his men

Cortes starts from Tlascala for the siege of Mexico.

give thanks to God for having brought them so far in safety. The army regarded the scene with a mixture of pleasure and sorrow: pleasure, from the hope they had of future conquest; sorrow, from the losses which that view brought back to their minds; and they all promised one another not to quit the country, but to conquer or die. After they had expressed that determination, they went on as gaily as if they were going to a festival.* That night the Spaniards halted at Coatepeque, a city subject to Tezcuco, and three leagues distant from it. The Spaniards found the place deserted; and as Cortes knew that the province belonging to Tezcuco was very populous, so that, as he remarks, it could furnish more than one hundred and fifty thousand warriors, he was very watchful that night. Nothing, however, happened; and, the next day, being the last of De-

* "Y aunque obimos mucho placer en las ver, considerando el daño pasado, que en ellas habiamos recibido, representósenos alguna tristeza por ello, y prometimos, todos de nunca de ella salir, sin Victoria, ó dejar allí las vidas. Y con esta determinacion ibamos todos tan alegres, como si fueramos á cosa de mucho placer."—LORENZANA, p. 188.

cember, they resumed their march in considerable perplexity as to what were the intentions of the Tezcucans. They had hardly left their quarters before they met four Indian Chiefs, one of whom Cortes recognised as an acquaintance, bearing a rod with a small flag of gold on it, a signal of peace, "which God knows," he adds, "how much we desired." The Chiefs, who came on the part of the King of Tezcuco, made excuses for the injuries which Cortes had received on a former occasion, and said that their King begged that Cortes would do no damage to their country, assuring him that they wished to be vassals to the King of Spain. After some further conference, they asked him whether he was going to the city that day, or whether he would take up his quarters in one or other of those towns which were suburbs* to Tezcuco. These suburbs extended for a league and a half, with houses all the way along.† Cortes replied that he meant to

Embassage to Cortes from the King of Tezcuco.

---

* This shows the prosperity of the district, and is an important indication of the peace which it must have enjoyed.

† "Que son como Arrabales de la dicha Ciudad, las quales se dicen Coatinchan, y Guaxuta, que están á una

reach Tezcuco that day, whereupon the Chiefs said that they would go forward and prepare the lodgings of the Spaniards. That evening, New Year's Eve, Cortes entered Tezcuco, and took up his quarters in the Palace of the King's late father, giving notice immediately, by a herald, that no Spaniard should quit the building without his leave. This he did to reassure the people, for he had noticed that not a tenth part of the usual population was visible, and that he could see no women or children, which was a bad sign. Some Spaniards having ascended the terraced tops of the building, which commanded the adjacent country, perceived that the inhabitants were flying from it, some betaking themselves with their goods to canoes upon the lake, and others hurrying off to the neighbouring sierras. Cortes immediately gave orders to stop their flight; but, as night now came quickly on, the pursuit was of no use. The King, whom Cortes says that he desired to have in his hands, "as he desired salvation," accompanied by many of the principal men,

Cortes enters Tezcuco.

The Tezcucans desert their city.

---

legua y media de ella, y siempre va todo poblado."—LORENZANA, p. 190.

was among the fugitives who had gone to the city of Mexico. It was in the hope of detaining Cortes and preventing his entering the city as an enemy, that the messengers from Tezcuco had gone to meet him and parley with him in the morning. The chiefs of the neighbouring suburbs, or towns as they may more properly be called, did not follow the example of the King of the Tezcucans in his flight to Mexico, but after a few days returned and made peace with Cortes. The Mexicans, hearing this, sent an angry message to them, assuring them at the same time that, if they had made peace with Cortes in order to save their lands, they might enjoy other and better lands if they would come to Mexico. This message had no effect, and the chiefs delivered the messengers into the hands of Cortes, who availed himself of the opportunity to send an offer of peace by them to the authorities at Mexico. He assured them that he did not desire war, although he had much cause for offence; but that he wished to be their friend, as he had been of yore. He added, they well knew that those who had been chiefly concerned in the former war with him were dead (the small-pox had been busy at Mexico,

The neighbouring chiefs make peace with Cortes.

He sends a message of peace to Mexico.

and had carried off the King); "wherefore," he said, "let the past be past, and do not give me occasion to destroy your lands and cities, which I should much regret." This peaceful message led to no result, but the alliance with the neighbouring chiefs was cemented; and, when narrating the matter to the Emperor, Cortes adds, as if he were already a vice-roy, "in the name of Your Majesty, I pardoned them their past errors, and so they remained content."

The Spanish General stayed for seven or eight days at Tezcuco, being occupied in fortifying his quarters; and when he had done that, he sallied forth with a portion of his forces to make an attack upon the beautiful town of Iztapalapa. Iztapalapa was, comparatively speaking, a small place, of which about two thirds were situated in the water. Cortes had an especial grudge against this town, because it had belonged to the late King, that brother of Montezuma, who had been a principal agent in the events which led to the Spaniards being driven out of the city. He was the person who was sent out by Cortes to order the market to be

Prepares to make an attack upon Iztapalapa.

resumed, and who had thereupon been adopted as the leader of the insurgents.

Cortes did not enter the town without a vigorous resistance on the part of some troops who were posted at two leagues distance from it, but they were not able to withstand him. About two thirds of a league before entering the town, he found that a large sluice-gate had been broken up, the position of which was between the Salt Lake and the Fresh-water Lake. The Spaniards thought little of this circumstance, but pushed on with all the "covetousness of victory," routed the inhabitants who made a stand in their town, and killed more than six thousand of them, men, women, and children, in which sad slaughter the Indian allies took a prominent part. When night came on, Cortes recalled his men from their work of plunder and destruction, and then finished by setting fire to some houses. While these were burning, it appears, says Cortes, that "Our Lord inspired me with the thought, and brought to my memory this sluice-gate which I had seen broken in the morning."* The great danger he was in

* This narrative only becomes intelligible on the sup-

struck him in a moment. He instantly gave orders for retreat. It was nine o'clock before he reached the spot of greatest inundation, which I think must have been between that hill which stood over the town and the short causeway connecting Iztapalapa with the main-land. Here Cortes found the water rushing in with great force. The Spaniards bounded across the dangerous pass (*pasamos á volapie*); but some of the Indian allies, not so agile or more encumbered, were drowned; and all the spoil was lost. If they had stopped for three hours more, or if the moon, always a favourer of the romantic Cortes, had not shone forth most opportunely on that night,* none of them would have escaped alive. When day dawned, the height of one lake was the same as the height of the other; and the Salt Lake was covered with canoes, containing Mexican soldiers, who had hoped to find the Spaniards cut off in their retreat, and surrounded

His great danger at that town.

position that Cortes entered Iztapalapa on the south side (as he had done before on his first entry into Mexico), and not on the Tezcucan side.

* See Veytia, "Hist. Antigua de Méjico," tom. iii. Apendice, cap. 16. Mejico, 1836.

by water. Cortes withdrew his men in safety to Tezcuco, having escaped one of the many great dangers of his life. Had any other of the Spanish commanders been the leader of that expedition, it would probably have perished. If valour be the sword, a keen appreciation of danger (often possessed in the highest degree by those who bear themselves best when in danger) is the shield of a great general, or, indeed, of any one who has to guide and to command.

After the return of Cortes to Tezcuco, the people of Otumba, who had already felt the weight of the Spanish General's hand, sent to seek his alliance, and were received as faithful vassals of the King of Spain.

The next enterprise which Cortes undertook, was one of great importance, for its object was to secure a free communication between his present position at Tezcuco and his friendly town of Tlascala, and also his own colony at Vera Cruz. For this purpose he sent the Alguazil Mayor, Gonzalo de Sandoval, to the town and province of Chalco. A battle took place; Sandoval was victorious; and two sons of the Lord of Chalco came

Battle in the province of Chalco.

to Tezcuco to make friends with Cortes. These Princes had always been friendly to him, but had hitherto been under the control of the Mexicans. They required a safe-guard for returning, and were accordingly placed under the escort of Sandoval, who was ordered, after seeing them in safety, to go on to Tlascala, and to bring back with him some Spaniards who had been left there, and a certain younger brother of the King of Tezcuco. This Prince had been one of the prisoners of Cortes before the retreat from Mexico, and being young, was easily indoctrinated with the Spanish modes of thought, and had received in baptism the name of Fernando. When this youth was brought to Tezcuco by Sandoval, Cortes gave him the kingdom of his forefathers. This, as we shall hereafter see, was a most politic stroke, and it was of immediate service to the Spanish cause. The Tezcucans, finding a member of their own royal family placed upon the vacant throne, began to bethink themselves of returning to their homes. Political refugees seldom meet with the good reception they expect, and to which they think their sufferings and their sacrifices entitle them. However that may be,

Cortes appoints a king of Tezcuco.

from the time of Don Fernando's accession, the town began to be repeopled by its former inhabitants, and to look like itself again.

Since his arrival at Tezcuco, Cortes had been continuously successful in attracting to his banner new allies amongst the Indians. He was now to hear of good news from Spain. A youth of his household made his way across the country, knowing the delight his master would receive from the intelligence (in the words of Cortes, "that nothing in the world would give him greater pleasure"), to inform him that a ship had arrived at Vera Cruz, bringing, besides the mariners, thirty or forty Spaniards, eight horses, with some cross-bows, muskets, and gunpowder. These seem but small reinforcements to make glad the heart of a man about to attempt the conquest of a great and populous country. Cortes, however, had men enough in his Indian allies to form the gross material of an army. But each Spaniard was as good as an officer; and the value of horses, guns, and powder, against an enemy who possessed none of these things, was incalculable.

The demands made upon Cortes in consequence of his Indian alliances were very great,

and at times very embarrassing. It was not to be expected that the advantage of such alliances could be all on one side; and on the very day that Cortes heard the news of the arrival of reinforcements from Spain, he received an embassage from the Chalcans, beseeching assistance against the Mexicans, who were coming upon them, they said, with great power. The remarks of Cortes upon this occasion are very notable, and furnish an explanation of much of his future conduct. In a letter to the King, he says, "I certify to Your Majesty, as I have done before, that, beyond our own labours and necessities, the greatest distress which I suffered, was in not being able to aid and succour our Indian allies, who, for being vassals of Your Majesty, were harassed and molested by the Mexicans."* The difficulty of difficulties in writing history, or reading it, is to appreciate the habitual current of ideas, the

The Chalcans ask for assistance from Cortes.

* "Y certifico á Vuestra Majestad, que como en la otra Relacian escribí, allende de nuestro trabajo, y necesidad, la mayor fatiga, que tenia era, no poder ayudar, y socorrer á los Indios nuestros Amigos, que por ser Vasallos de Vuestra Majestad, eran molestados, y trabajados de los de Culúa."—LORENZANA, p. 204.

basis of thought, often so strangely opposed to our own, which belonged to the generation of which we read or write. It seems a mockery to us in the present age to talk of these Indian provinces as in a state of vassalage to the King of Spain; but evidently Cortes and the Spaniards of his time held very different notions on this subject. Cortes thought that the men who had once become vassals of the King of Spain, had not only duties to perform, which he was very rigorous in exacting, but also that they had distinct claims upon him, as the King's Lieutenant in those parts, an office into which he had inducted himself. On the present occasion, therefore, he was greatly perplexed by the demand of the Chalcans, for he could not spare his own men, being about to send a detachment of them under Sandoval to escort the Tlascalans who were to bring him the wrought materials of the brigantines.

His motive for granting it.

He resolved, however, to aid the Chalcans by claiming assistance for them from the neighbouring provinces, which were in his alliance. Accordingly, he was about to furnish them with a letter which, though they could not read nor

comprehend it, was always taken as a sort of voucher, when it fortunately happened that before the Chalcan embassage departed, there arrived, from the provinces friendly to Cortes, messengers, who had been sent to see whether he required any aid, for his allies had observed many smokes, and were afraid that Cortes was in need of their assistance. Cortes thanked the messengers warmly, told them that, thanks be to God, the Spaniards had always had the victory, and that glad as he was at the good will their province had shown, he was still more glad at having an opportunity of making them confederates with the Chalcans, which he succeeded in doing; and afterwards they assisted one another.

In three days after this business was settled, Cortes despatched Sandoval for the materials of the brigantines. When the Alguazil Mayor approached the territory of Tlascala, he found that the expedition had already set out. The men appointed to carry the materials were eight thousand. There was another body of two thousand, to furnish a relief for the bearers, and to carry provisions; and the escort consisted of a body of twenty thousand armed men. A noted warrior

of Tlascala, called Chichimecatl, led the van with ten thousand, and the other ten thousand brought up the rear under the command of two other Tlascalan Chiefs. On entering an enemy's country different arrangements had to be made. Chichimecatl had had the wood-work (*la tablazon*) of the brigantines under his charge, and the other captains the rigging and cordage (*la ligazon*). It was now thought advisable to throw the heavier part of the burden in the rear; but it was with the greatest difficulty that they could persuade the brave Chieftain to accept that position. At last, however, the march was thus arranged. In front came eight horsemen and a hundred Spanish foot; then ten thousand Tlascalans, forming an advance-guard, and also with wings thrown out to the right and the left; then came the bearers of the rigging and cordage; after them the bearers of the heavier burdens; and the whole line of march was closed by eight more Spanish horsemen, a hundred Spanish foot, and Chichimecatl with his force of ten thousand men. It would have been worth while for the Mexicans to have made almost any efforts and any sacrifice to have cut off or embarrassed this formidable reinforcement; but

The order of the march for carrying the materials of the brigantines.

they did not do so, and in three days' time it approached Tezcuco. Cortes went out to meet it; the Indians put on their plumes of feathers and their handsome dresses; and the procession joyfully entered Tezcuco to the sound of musical instruments. From the van-guard to the rear-guard it occupied two leagues in length, and was six hours in entering the town, without the ranks being broken.

The escort enters Tezcuco.

The Tlascalans expressed their longing to be led against the Mexicans, and their readiness to die in company with the Spaniards. Cortes thanked them, and told them that for the present they must rest themselves, but that very soon he would give them an abundance of work to do.

Cortes goes out to reconnoitre.

While his ships were being put together, Cortes went out to reconnoitre, taking with him a considerable force of his own men and thirty thousand of his allies. As he did not yet quite trust the Tezcucans, he did not let them know of his purpose or even of the direction of his march. His object, however, was to have some personal communication with the Mexicans. He, therefore, went round the north part of the Salt Lake,

and after the usual encounters, succeeded in occupying Tlacuba, a town which was in close proximity to Mexico. Very "pretty" combats took place every day between the Tlascalans and the Mexicans, and much vituperation was interchanged. Frequently the Spaniards and their allies made an entrance along the causeway into the suburbs of Mexico. Then, discourses such as Homer in more dignified language would have commemorated, passed between the combatants. "Come in, come in, and rest yourselves," exclaimed the indignant Mexicans; or they would say, "Perhaps you think there is now another Montezuma, so that you may do just what pleases you?" But one memorable conversation they held with Cortes himself, he being on one side of an aperture in the causeway where the bridge had been taken up, and they being on the other. The Spanish General made a sign to his men that they should be quiet, and the Mexican Chiefs on their side caused silence to be maintained amongst their people. Cortes began by asking whether they were madmen, and if it was their wish to be destroyed. He then demanded to know if any principal Lord was pre-

Singular interview between Cortes and the Mexicans.

sent amongst them, and, if so, requested he would approach, that they might have a conference. The Mexicans replied, that all that multitude of warriors whom he saw there were Lords; wherefore that he should say whatever he wanted to say. But Cortes, probably seeing from the temper and bearing of the Mexicans that nothing was to be done in this conference, remained silent, upon which they began to mock him, when some one on the Spanish side shouted out "that the Mexicans were dying of hunger, and that we should not permit them to go out and seek food." They replied, that they were in no want of it, and that if they should be, they would eat the Spaniards and the Tlascalans. Then one of them took some maize cakes, and threw them at the Spaniards, saying, "Take and eat, if you are hungry, for we are not so in the least;" and then they began immediately to shout and to fight. Cortes, seeing that there was no likelihood of obtaining a favourable reply to his overtures, and wishing to hasten the completion of the brigantines, returned to Tezcuco, after remaining six days in Tlacuba.

Cortes returns to Tezcuco.

After his return to Tezcuco, Cortes received

another message from the Chalcans, imploring assistance, and he again sent Sandoval to them, who was completely victorious over the Mexicans in the open field.

Arrival of reinforcements and of a Royal Treasurer.

The heart of Cortes was now gladdened by the news of fresh reinforcements from Spain, which came in three vessels. It was, probably, in one of these vessels that the King's Treasurer, Juan de Alderete, arrived. There came also at this time a certain friar, named Pedro de Aria, who brought indulgences from the Pope, so that if the soldiers were "somewhat indebted" (and the ways of war are not particularly sinless) they might compound for their transgressions; and we shall not be astonished to hear that the friar soon became rich.*

Another branding of slaves.

Sandoval having returned with many slaves, there was again a day of branding; but the same kind of injustice that the common soldiers had complained of was repeated, so that in future they did not bring their Indian female slaves

* "Traxo unas Bulas de señor S. Pedro, y con ellas nos componian, si algo eramos en cargo en las guerras en que andavamos: por manera que en pocos meses el fraile fué rico y compuesto á Castilla."—BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 143.

to be branded, but pretended that they were *naborias* (that is, domestic servants), and that they had come peaceably from the neighbouring townships.*

The Chalcans were again harassed by their enemies, and again they summoned Cortes to their aid, sending him a large picture, on a white cloth, of the armies that were coming against them, and of the roads that they were taking. How it is to be wished that the Spaniards had adopted the same mode of description, and that we possessed now any single drawing of a Mexican building that we could thoroughly rely upon!

Cortes, partly with a view to succour these Chalcans, who were a continual care to him, and partly to make a thorough survey of the borders of the Lake, now undertook an expedition southwards. It was full of adventure and of risk for him; but, as it had no bearing on the main events of the war, I shall not give it in detail. It was

* "Deziamos que eran Naborias, que avian venido de paz de los pueblos comarcanos, y de Tlascala,"—BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 143.

in the course of this expedition, after he had been in great peril of his life, and had lost two of his grooms, who were carried off to be sacrificed, that he was standing at Tlacuba, looking at the great temple in Mexico (which was clearly visible from there), and thinking, it is supposed, of all that he had suffered in the *noche triste*, when he was heard to sigh deeply. It was this expression of sorrow which gave rise to a romance, well known at the time, beginning with the following words:—

The sadness of Cortes.

"En Tlacuba está Cortés,
Con su esquadron esforçado,
Triste estava y mui penoso,
Triste y con gran cuidado:
La una mano en la mexilla,
Y la otra en el costado," &c.*

Bernal Diaz, who must have been present, remembers that the Bachiller, Alonso Perez, endeavoured to comfort Cortes. "Señor Captain," he said, "let not your Honour be so sad, for in

* In Tlacuba stands Cortes, with his valiant troops around him: sad he stood and full of pain; sad and oppressed with care; one hand to his cheek, and the other at his side.

war these things are wont to occur, and, at least, it will not be said of you,

"Mira Nero de Tarpeya
Á Roma como se ardia;"*

and Cortes answered that Alonso Perez knew how often he had sent to Mexico, in order to persuade its citizens to make peace; and that the sadness which he felt was not for one thing alone, but in thinking of all that would have to be encountered before the Spaniards should obtain the mastery. It will astonish those who have been

---

* "Mira Nero de Tarpeya
A Roma como se ardia;
Gritos dan niños y viejos,
Y él de nada se dolia.
Que alegre vista!"

"Nero, from the Tarpeian rock, beholds
Rome, how it was burning:
Young men and old men are shrieking,
And he grieves for nothing.
What a cheerful sight!"

"Parece que este romance sobre el incendio de Roma gozó de gran valimiento entre el público, pues está contenido en muchas colecciones, si bien muy diferente en unas de como va en otras."—DEPPING, *Romancero Castellano*, Num. 46.

accustomed to consider Cortes as little else than a compound of craft and cruelty, to see him display such tenderness on this occasion. They will recall the massacre at Cholula, and the ferocious condemnation of Qualpopoca and of those other Mexican officers who had merely executed the commands of their sovereign. But it is highly probable that this tenderness of Cortes was an essential part of his character; and, in truth, it does not need much knowledge of mankind to discern how little a man's actions may tell of himself, and how the most striking deeds of his life may but conceal the deepest parts of his character.

Cortes was quite justified in making the statement, that he had sought to persuade the Mexicans to make peace; for, previously to this expedition, he had sent three Mexican chiefs, who had been captured in the war against the Chalcans, with a letter containing proposals for peace, the tenour of which he had carefully explained to them by interpreters. Nor was this the only occasion, for he had lost no opportunity of sending back any Mexican who fell into his hands, instructing him to admonish his fellow-

citizens, and urge them to submit themselves to the Spaniards.*

Cortes having concluded this expedition round the Lake, during which he underwent great peril, returned to a still greater peril of a domestic nature. A man of the name of Villafaña, a great friend of the Governor of Cuba, acting in concert with some other soldiers of the party of Narvaez, formed a conspiracy to murder Cortes. The plan was as follows. They had heard that a vessel had just come from Spain, so that letters and despatches might be immediately expected. They intended, therefore, to enter the apartment of Cortes when he was seated at table, eating in company with his captains and soldiers;† they would then offer him a letter, saying that it came from his father, Martin Cortes, and while he was reading it, they would stab him and the rest of the company. They had arranged who was to suc-

Villafaña's conspiracy.

---

* "Donde quiera que podia haber alguno de la Ciudad, gelo tornaba á embiar para les amonestar, y requerir, que se diessen de Paz."—LORENZANA, p. 216.

† "Quando Cortés estuviesse sentado á la mesa comiendo con sus Capitanes é soldados."—BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 146.

ceed him in the command, and many persons were implicated in the conspiracy. But all conspiracies are subject to this dilemma;—either the secret is entrusted to very few, in which case the conspirators are weak and unprepared for the emergency when it comes—or rather for the transactions after the emergency—or it is entrusted to many, and unless acted upon instantly, can hardly be kept a secret. In this case too many had been consulted, and a common soldier betrayed the secret. Cortes summoned his own adherents, with the alcaldes and alguazils, entered Villafaña's apartments, and made him prisoner. Cortes then took from him a memorial which contained the signatures of the conspirators, but afterwards gave out that Villafaña had eaten this paper, and that he, Cortes, had never seen it. Villafaña was executed, and several other persons were imprisoned, but no one besides Villafaña suffered capitally. This plot gave an opportunity to Cortes to institute without offence a guard for his own person, which was afterwards of signal service to him during the siege of Mexico. Thus this danger turned out, as many had done before, a source of safety to Cortes: indeed, so a wise man

The conspiracy is defeated.

Cortes establishes a body-guard.

as he was can generally make considerable profit out of his past dangers and sufferings.

Everything was now ready for the great enterprise of the siege of Mexico—the turning point of the fortunes of Cortes. His brigantines had been put together. The canal was finished, along which they were to be launched from Tezcuco into the Lake. He had exhausted his efforts to bring the Mexicans to terms. He had made, in person, a thorough survey of the adjacent country; and he was rich in alliances with many of the neighbouring states. He now summoned his Indian allies to his aid. They were desired to come from Cholula, Tlascala, Chalco, Huaxocingo, and other towns, and to join his forces at Tezcuco within ten days. Though Tezcuco was a large town it could not contain the Indian allies. The Tlascalans came in good equipment and with admirable spirit, eager for the fray.* Bernal Diaz

Cortes summons his Indian allies.

* "Entraron en Tetzcuco dos Dias antes de la Fiesta de Espíritu Santo, y toda la Gente tardó tres Dias en entrar, segun en sus Memoriales dice Alonso de Ojeda, ni con ser Tetzcuco tan gran Ciudad, cabian en ella; venian galanes, bien armados, deseosos de pelear, como lo

well compares the clouds of Indians who followed in their march to the birds of rapine which were wont to follow an army in Italy; and the comparison was not merely a poetical or fanciful one, as the food both of the foul birds and of the Indians was occasionally human flesh.* His Indian allies, however, were not merely useful to Cortes, but absolutely requisite; and it would have been ludicrous to have attempted the siege of Mexico without them. Cortes went out to meet his especial friends, the Tlascalans, and addressed the Spaniards in their presence somewhat in the following manner:—

Speech of Cortes to his men in the presence of the Tlascalans.

Enlarging upon the quality of the enterprise, and the honour which would be gained in sub-

mostraron bien."—TORQUEMADA, *Monarquía Indiana*, lib. iv. cap. 89.

* "Iba tanta multitud de ellos á causa de los despojos que avian de aver: y lo mas cierto, por hartarse de carne humana, si huviesse batallas, porque bien sabian, que las avia de ver, y son á manera de dezir, como quando en Italia salia un exército de una parte á otra, y les seguian cuervos, y milanos, y otras aves de rapiña, que se mantenian de los cuerpos muertos que quedavan en el campo quando se dava alguna mui sangrienta batalla: ansí he juzgado, que nos seguian tantos millares de Indios."—BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 144.

duing the finest and largest city in the world (*la mejor y mayor ciudad del mundo*), he said, that, putting aside the service of God, which was the most important thing, great glory was to be gained; and also vengeance for the affront they had received; moreover such a conquest for their King as mortal men had never before accomplished on behalf of any monarch. He reminded them that they were Castillians, a warlike and most brave nation; that, including their allies, they had an army such as the Romans had never collected together; that they had vessels to destroy their enemies' canoes, and to enter into the streets of the city of Mexico, and also that they were well provided with supplies. He said that with their brigantines they were masters upon the water; with their horses, upon the open plain: while their position upon the terra-firma enabled them to retire, if it should be necessary. He concluded by telling them that no great thing was ever done but at great sacrifice (*que nunca mucho costô' poco*); and then he spoke to them of all the rewards of victory, not, as he said, to give them courage, for he well knew that they had no need of that, but only to remind them who they

were, and what was their enterprise, that they might enter upon it with joy and contentment, since, as honourable men, this war had been undertaken by them for the sake of God and of themselves.

The soldiers respond to the exhortation of Cortes.

The principal captains replied that the whole army understood that it was an agreement amongst them not to abandon the siege until they conquered or died, and that they came to this resolve with greater willingness, having him for their General with whom they were well contented, as they were ready to prove by their deeds.

CHAPTER XI.

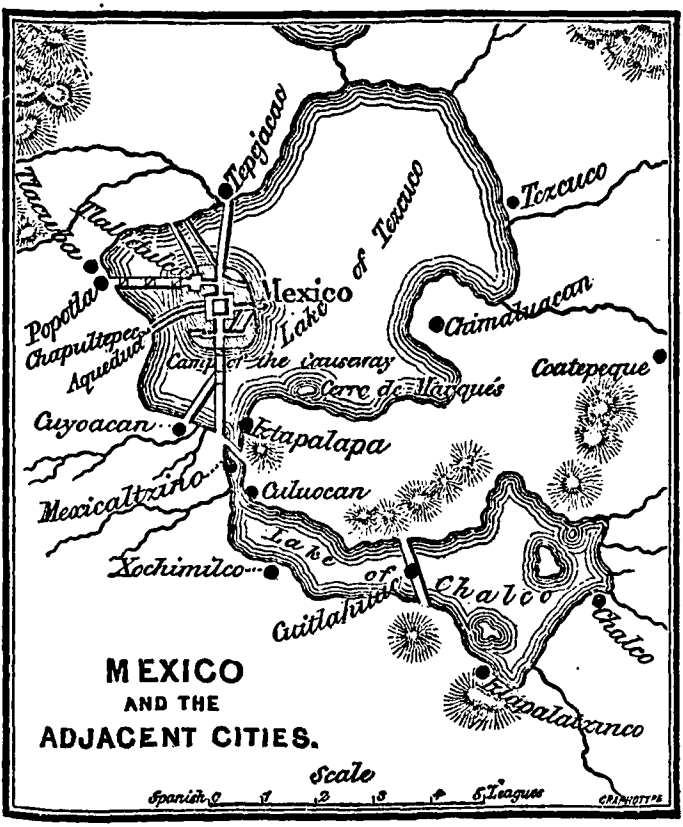
The Spaniards and their allies commence the siege—Defeat of the Mexicans on the Lake—Mexico entirely invested—Council summoned by the Mexican king—Result of the first general attack—The various successes of Alvarado's division—Impatience of the soldiers—The second general attack—The Spaniards defeated.

CORTES formed his troops into three divisions, placing one under the command of Pedro de Alvarado, another under Cristoval de Olid, and the third under Gonzalo de Sandoval, the Alguazil Mayor.

Alvarado's division.

Pedro de Alvarado had thirty horsemen, eighteen cross-bowmen or musketeers, and a hundred and fifty men with sword and buckler. Twenty thousand Tlascalan warriors accompanied this division, under the command of Xicotencatl,

el mozo. Alvarado's division* was to take up its quarters at Tlacuba.



The second division, commanded by Cristoval

* Bernal Diaz, the historian, was in this division.

Olid's division.

de Olid, the Maestre de Campo, consisted of thirty-three horsemen, eighteen cross-bowmen or musketeers, and a hundred and sixty swordsmen. A body of more than twenty thousand Indian allies accompanied this force, which was to take up its position in Cuyoacan.

Sandoval's division.

Sandoval, the Alguazil Mayor, had under his command twenty-four horsemen, four musketeers, thirteen cross-bowmen, and a hundred and fifty swordsmen, fifty of them being picked young men; a sort of body-guard, as I conceive, to Cortes.* The Indian allies who accompanied this division, amounted to more than thirty thousand, being all those who came from Huaxocingo, Cholula, and Chalco. This division was to march to Iztapalapa, destroy it, pass on by a causeway under cover of the brigantines, and unite with Olid's division at Cuyoacan, in the neighbourhood of which the Alguazil Mayor was to choose a spot for his camp.

There were left, to man the brigantines, more than three hundred men, most of them good sea-

---

* "Mancebos escogidos, que yo trahía en mi Compañía."—LORENZANA, p. 236.

men—each brigantine having twenty-five men, with six cross-bowmen or musketeers. Contrary to the advice of the principal personages* in his army, but very wisely, Cortes had determined to lead this division himself, for, as he afterwards remarked, the key† of the whole war was in the ships.

The brigantines commanded by Cortes in person.

Previously, however, to the first division of the army leaving for Tezcuco, an incident occurred which might have been fraught with the most serious consequences. To regulate the behaviour of his men towards each other is always one of the greatest difficulties for the general of an allied army, and one that requires the nicest

* "Aunque yo deseaba mucho irme por la Tierra, por dar órden en los Reales, como los Capitanes eran Personas de quien se podia muy bien fiar lo que tenian entre manos, y lo de los Bergantines importaba mucha importancia, y se requeria gran concierto, y cuidado, determiné de me meter en ellos, porque la mas aventura, y riesgo era el que se esperaba por el Agua, aunque por las Personas Principales de mi Compañía me fué requerido en formar, que me fuesse con las Guarniciónes, porque ellos pensaban, que ellas llevaban lo mas peligroso."—LORENZANA, p. 240.

† "La llave de toda la Guerra estaba en ellos."—LORENZANA, p. 242.

management. Cortes did all that he could, by good rules, stringently maintained, to make his Spaniards behave well to his Indians. It happened, however, that a Spaniard inflicted some personal injury upon a cousin of Xicotencatl, the younger, the Tlascalan Prince who had formerly commanded the armies of that republic against Cortes. Whether in consequence of this new disgust, or from his old grudge, or, as some say, from the wish to see a Tlascalan lady,* Xicotencatl resolved to throw up his command, and to quit the camp. It is not improbable that his conduct was influenced by motives which might be termed treasonable, or patriotic, according to the point of view from which they are regarded; and he may have thought it a good opportunity for raising the standard of revolt against the Spaniards.

It was arranged that the Tlascalans attached to Alvarado's division should set off a day before the Spaniards, in order not to embarrass them in the march. As the Tlascalans were proceeding carelessly along, Chichimecatl, the brave warrior

* See Torquemada, lib. iv. cap. 90.

who had brought the brigantines from Tlascala, and had been so displeased at not being allowed to lead the van-guard, observed that their General, Xicotencatl, was not with them. He returned immediately, and informed Cortes. The Spanish General lost no time in despatching messengers who were to adjure the fugitive Tlascalan Chief to resume his command, begging him to consider that his father, Don Lorenzo (the old Tlascalan Chief had been baptized), if he had not been old and blind, would himself have led his countrymen against Mexico. To this Xicotencatl replied, that, if his father and Magisca had listened to him, they would not have been so much lorded over by the Spaniards, who made them do whatever they wished; and he gave for his final answer, that he would not return. Cortes, being informed of this reply, immediately ordered an alguazil, with four horsemen and five Indian chiefs, to go in pursuit of Xicotencatl, and, wherever they should come up with him, to hang him. This sentence was carried into effect, notwithstanding that Pedro de Alvarado interceded warmly in behalf of the Tlascalan Prince. It will show the reverence which the Indians enter-

The Tlascalan General deserts his army.

Xicotencatl put to death.

tained for their princes, that many of them came to seek a scrap of his clothes; * and it is another instance of the stern audacity of Cortes, that he should have ventured to put such a potent chief to death at so critical a period. But, as will hereafter be seen, it was very fortunate that he did so. The three things in a man's character which are best rewarded in this world are boldness, hardness, and circumspection. Cortes possessed the first and last qualifications in the highest degree; and, if he were not by nature a hard man, had the power of summoning up hardness whenever it was requisite to do so.

Alvarado and Olid quit Tezcuco, May, 1521.

On the 10th of May,† 1521, Alvarado and Olid quitted Tezcuco in company, and proceeded to occupy the positions assigned to them. The very first night after their departure these Com-

* "En muriendo, llegaron muchos Indios á tomar la Manta, y el Mastil, que es una Faxa ancha, que servia de Bragas, como Almaíçal; y el que llevaba un pedaço, creia, que llevaba una gran Reliquia. Atemoriçó mucho esta muerte á todos, por ser este Indio Persona mui Principal, y señalada."—TORQUEMADA, *Monarquía Indiana*, lib. iv. cap. 90.

† Bernal Diaz says it was on the 13th of May.

manders had a quarrel about the encampment of their men, which Cortes learned directly, and interposing with all speed, sent an officer that night with instructions to reprimand these Generals, and afterwards to make them friends again. On their way to Tlacuba they found the intervening towns deserted, and, when they came to Tlacuba itself, that city also was without inhabitants. The army occupied the palace of the King, and, though it was the hour of Vespers when they entered, the Tlascalans, with the hatred of neighbours, made a reconnaissance along two of the causeways which led to Mexico, and fought for two or three hours with the Mexicans.

The great aqueduct destroyed.

The ensuing morning Alvarado and Olid commenced the work of destruction by cutting off, according to the commands of Cortes, the great aqueduct which supplied the city. It is melancholy to observe that such works as these, which are among the greatest triumphs of civilization, should be the first objects of attack in war, but it was good service, and thoroughly executed, although not without considerable opposition from the Mexicans, both by land and water.

On the succeeding day, Olid, with the whole of

Olid moves to Cuyoacan.

his division, moved on to Cuyoacan, described as being two leagues from Tlacuba.* They found this city also deserted,† and they occupied the regal palace there.

Cortes sends Sandoval to Iztapalapa.

It was now time for Cortes himself to quit Tezcuco, and commence operations in concert with the Alguazil Mayor. At four in the morning, on the day after the Festival of Corpus Christi, Cortes despatched Sandoval with the whole of his division, to Iztapalapa. That city was about seven short leagues distant. They

---

* I give the distances generally from the words of the first conquerors. These distances, however, will not always correspond with the actual distances as ascertained by modern investigation, and sometimes, indeed, differ from them widely, as in the above instance. I conjecture that the word league, as used by Cortes or Bernal Diaz, represented a very variable quantity, and depended much upon the nature of the ground traversed, namely, whether it were champaign, hilly, or wooded.

† In the estimate which we shall afterwards have to make of the numbers which perished in the siege of Mexico, it must be recollected that immense additions to the population of the place were made by the abandonment of these flourishing towns on the borders of the lake.

arrived there a little after mid-day, and began to set fire to the houses, and to attack the inhabitants. These were a maritime race (the town was half built upon the lake), and, not being able to withstand the immense* force which Sandoval brought against them, took to the water in their canoes, whereupon the Alguazil Mayor occupied the town without further molestation.

Cortes sets sail from Tezcuco.

Cortes, who was the last of the generals to quit Tezcuco, set sail with the brigantines immediately after he had despatched Sandoval to Iztapalapa, and using both oars and sails, came within sight of the town at the time that Sandoval was entering it. Cortes had intended to have attacked that part of the town which lay in the water, but seeing probably that Sandoval would be able to accomplish the work without him, and observing that a large hill which rose out of the water (now called the *Cerro de Marqués*) was covered with the enemy, he commenced his attack upon their position on that eminence. It was

* It appears to have been increased since the original division of the forces, for it is now spoken of as thirty-five thousand or forty thousand men.

The first success of Cortes.

very lofty and very abrupt, and the heights were fortified by walls of dry stone; but the Spaniards succeeded in forcing the entrenchments, and put all the defenders to the sword, except the women and children. Five-and-twenty Spaniards were wounded, but, as Cortes says, "it was a very pretty victory."*

The citizens of Iztapalapa had made smoke-signals (*ahumadas*) from the tops of some temples which were situated upon a very lofty hill, close to the town. From these signals, the Mexicans and the inhabitants of the other towns upon the borders of the lake, learnt the position of the Spanish vessels, and forthwith sent out a great flotilla of five hundred canoes, which bore down straight upon the brigantines. Cortes and his men instantly quitted their position on the hill, and embarked in their vessels. The orders to the captains were, on no account to move until Cortes should give the command. His object was to avoid any partial or disjointed action, and, if he struck at all, to strike a great blow,† such

500 Mexican canoes come out to attack the Spaniards.

* "Pero fué muy hermosa Victoria."—LORENZANA, p. 241.

† "Como yo deseaba mucho, que el primer reencuen-

as should at once ensure his naval ascendancy. Silently, therefore, and as if entranced, the brigantines rested upon the water; while the vast multitude of canoes came rushing on, the Mexicans exhausting their strength in their haste to encompass the brigantines. When they had come within two bow-shots of the Spaniards, they rested upon their oars, and gazed upon the new form of their enemy. Still, the Spaniards did not move, and the hostile armaments remained in this position until, as Cortes says, "it pleased Our Lord" that a favourable breeze should arise from the land, upon which, the Spanish Commander immediately gave orders to commence the attack. The weighty brigantines bore down upon the light craft of the enemy with a fatal impetus, crushing them together wherever they came in contact with them. It soon became a total defeat. Numbers of the canoes were sunk, and the Mexican sailors in them destroyed. It must have been a flight almost as soon as it was an encounter; and the brigantines pursued the

The Mexicans are defeated on the lake.

---

tro, que con ellos obiessemos, fuesse de mucha victoria." —LORENZANA, p. 241.

canoes for three long leagues, until they took refuge in the water streets of Mexico. Indeed, that any remained to escape was only owing to the multitude there were to destroy. Thus ended the hopes of the Mexicans of gaining, by their numbers, any advantage on the water; and the maxim of the great modern warrior * was again signally exemplified,—namely, that the art of war is the art of being strongest at the immediate point of encounter. If the Mexicans could literally have covered the lake of Tezcuco with canoes, the force and weight of a brigantine, whenever it came in contact with these small vessels, gave it instantly such a decided superiority, as to leave no scope for action on the other side.

Successful movement of Olid's division.

Meanwhile, the division under Olid at Cuyoacan could see and rejoice in the victory of their fellow-countrymen. They immediately resolved to enhance it, by making a vigorous charge along the causeway which connected that city with Mexico; and, with the aid of the brigantines (which, after giving chase to the Mexican boats,

* Napoleon.

approached the causeway), this division of the

army succeeded in making a victorious advance of more than a league upon the causeway.

At the point of the causeway where Cortes and

his brigantines arrived, after chasing the Mexican boats into the city, there happened to be one or two idol towers, surrounded by a low stone wall. He landed, took the towers after a sharp contest, and then brought up three heavy cannon from the brigantines. The causeway was crowded with the enemy from that spot to the very gates of Mexico; and, moreover, there were numbers of canoes, on that side at least of the causeway where the brigantines were not, or where they could not get at them. Cortes brought one of the guns to bear upon the dense masses of the enemy, and the effect of that fire must have been tremendous. Happily for the Mexicans, there was a deficiency of powder, arising from the carelessness of an artilleryman, by which a quantity had been ignited; and thus Cortes was unable to follow up this advantage.

Cortes lands on the southern causeway.

The Spanish Commander had originally intended to proceed to the camp at Cuyoacan; but, with that power of rapidly changing his plans which is one of the elements in the character of a great general, he determined to take up a position at the spot where he now was, and to summon reinforcements both from Sandoval's and

Olid's camp. That first night was a night of much danger for the "Camp of the Causeway," as Cortes calls it, as the Mexicans, notwithstanding the defeat and loss which they had suffered during the day, made a midnight attack upon the Spaniards. Cortes, however, had not failed to send at once to Sandoval at Iztapalapa for all the gunpowder which was in that camp; and, as each brigantine had a small field-gun (*tiro pequeño de campo*), the Spaniards were enabled to make a vigorous resistance. Thus the enemy were beaten off for that night.

The "Camp of the Causeway."

The next morning, at early dawn, reinforcements arrived at the Camp of the Causeway, and they hardly had arrived, before the Mexicans issued from the city and commenced their attack, both by land and by water, and with such shouts and yells, that it seemed as if heaven and earth were coming together. But "loud cries divide no flesh," while the thunder of cannon significantly represents the destruction it accompanies. The Spaniards succeeded in gaining one bridge and one barricade, and drove the Mexicans back

The second day's siege.

to the nearest houses of the city. The brigantines were upon the east side of the causeway, and, consequently, the canoes could approach with less danger on the western side. Cortes, alert to seize every advantage, broke up a small portion of the causeway near his camp, and made four brigantines pass through it. He was thus enabled to drive back the western fleet of canoes into the water-streets of the city. The rest of the brigantines not only put to flight the enemy on their side of the causeway, but, finding * canals into which they could enter securely, they were enabled to capture several of the Mexican canoes, and also to burn many houses in the suburbs. Thus ended the second day of the siege.

On the next morning Sandoval fought his way from Iztapalapa to Cuyoacan, and afterwards arrived at the "Camp of the Causeway" in time to take part in a little battle, in which he was

* In the course of the siege several circumstances occur which show how immense must have been the size of Mexico. Notwithstanding their former stay in the city, it appears from the expression "finding," that the Spaniards were up to that time ignorant of the existence of those canals.

wounded. For six days the fighting continued much in the same manner as when Cortes first arrived, the brigantines, however, gaining great advantages, especially by means of a large canal which they discovered, that went all round the city, and enabled them to penetrate into some of the densest parts of it, and thus to do considerable damage. They had now so completely quelled the small craft of the Mexicans, that no canoe ventured to approach within a quarter of a league of the "Camp of the Causeway."

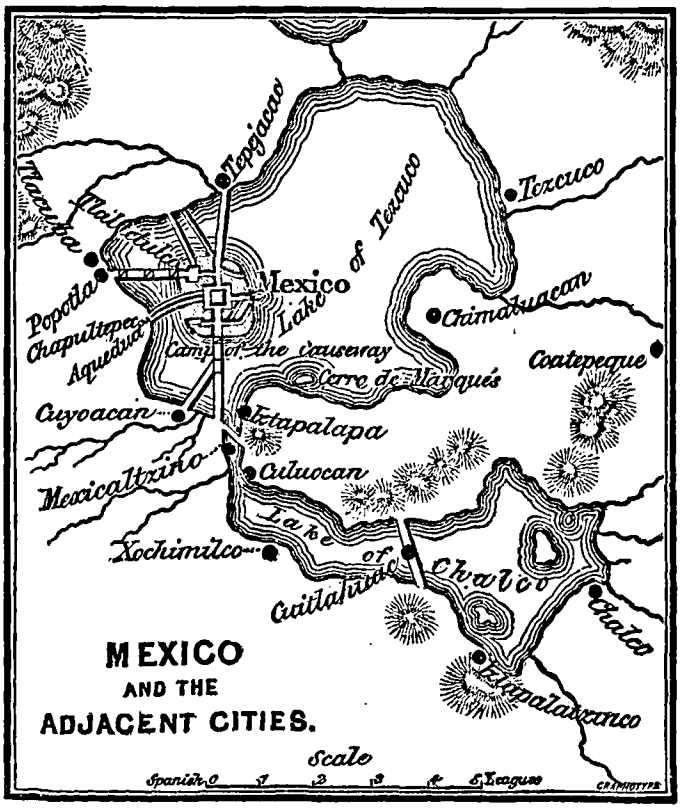
The brigantines enter a great canal.

On the seventh or eighth day, Pedro de Alvarado sent from Tlacuba to inform Cortes that there was a causeway* at the other end of the town, by which the Mexicans went in and out as they pleased. This was the causeway which led to Tepejacac. Upon receiving this intelligence, Cortes sent the Alguazil Mayor to occupy a posi-

Another causeway discovered.

* The error, as it seems to me, in the general descriptions of Mexico, given both by the conquerors and those who came after them, is in not mentioning causeways enough. There was another little causeway close to this large one, which also was connected with the terra firma, and was commanded by Sandoval's camp. There is still a causeway unaccounted for, according to the most ancient map of Mexico.

tion in front of this newly-discovered causeway. He took this step because he felt that it was re-



quisite in order to complete the investment of the place: otherwise, as he remarks, he would have

been more glad of the Mexicans going out of the city than they could have been themselves, for he well knew how to deal with them in the open plain. From that day forward, the city of Mexico was entirely invested.

Sandoval sent to that quarter.

Mexico entirely invested.

We must now turn for a moment from the besiegers to the besieged. When Quauhtemotzin, the Priest-King of Mexico, perceived that the siege had commenced in earnest,—and with sieges, as appears from Mexican architecture, these warriors were well acquainted,—he summoned a great council of his lords and captains. Then, laying before them the state in which they were,—the revolt of many of their tributary provinces, the want of fresh water, the strength of the brigantines, the destruction which had already taken place of some of the principal posts of defence, the dangers and miseries to which they must look forward,—he asked what was their opinion about coming to terms with the Spaniards? In reply to the Monarch's question the young men and the warriors expressed their desire for war.*

Quauhtemotzin's speech to his council.

Their voice was for a continuance of the war.

* "Los Mancebos, y Gente gallarda, queria la Guerra." —TORQUEMADA, *Monarquia Indiana*, lib. iv. cap. 90

There were others, however, who said, that as they had four Spaniards and several Indians whom they had taken, and were about to sacrifice, they should be in no haste to do so, in order that, if things went worse with them, they might in a few days' time, through the medium of these prisoners, commence negotiations. Others, again, more religiously inclined, maintained that their only course was, with many sacrifices and prayers, to commend themselves to the gods, whose cause was at stake;* and that the Mexican people should trust in the goodness of these superior beings not to forsake them.

The fanatical counsel prevailed. Not, I think, that even in Mexico there were not wise men enough to have contended against such fanaticism; but, from the former conduct of the Spaniards, there was so little to be said on the other side. In truth,—as the son-in-law of Montezuma afterwards informed the historian Oviedo,†—after the attack of Alvarado upon the unarmed chiefs in the temple, the Mexicans put no more

* Torquemada, "Monarquía Indiana," lib. iv. cap. 90.
† Oviedo, "Hist. Gen. y Nat." lib. xxxiii. cap. 54.

trust in the Spaniards. This man, Pedro de Alvarado, was one of the most pernicious adventurers of those times. It seldom happens to any one person to be a mighty cause of mischief, almost the cause of downfal, to two great empires; but such were Alvarado's fortunes, as may be seen in the histories of Peru and Mexico, the latter of which he ruined directly, and the former indirectly, and in both cases by acts of wonderful audacity and folly. It has often surprised me that Cortes should have placed so much confidence in such a man; but distinguished personal bravery is such an advantage,—and it was much more so in those times than in the present,—that Cortes may well be excused for putting his trust in a man who, at least, was never known to falter in action.

Pedro de Alvarado, a pernicious conqueror.

The councillors who were in favour of negotiation had, therefore, little or nothing to urge for their view of the question but the probability of more and larger disasters occurring if their advice were not followed. Finally, they were overruled; and the prisoners were sacrificed. The gods being thus appeased, their responses became gracious; and the King braced up all his energies for war.

The King determines upon war.

"Some have been of opinion," says the Spanish historian of the Indies, "that the Devil was not in the habit of appearing to the Indians, and that if he did appear to them at all, it was very seldom: and that the responses of the gods were the invention of the priests to preserve the authority which these men had over that people."* The Priest-King must have known well the nature of the visions and revelations which were reported to the common people; but the fate of Montezuma was before his eyes. The people were for war; the Spaniards were few; and there would not be wanting those who could calculate, as on a former occasion, how many Mexicans might be advantageously sacrificed for one Spaniard. The Tlascalans and all the Indian allies of the Spaniards were as nothing in the eyes of the Mexicans; and so the war was again resumed with fury.†

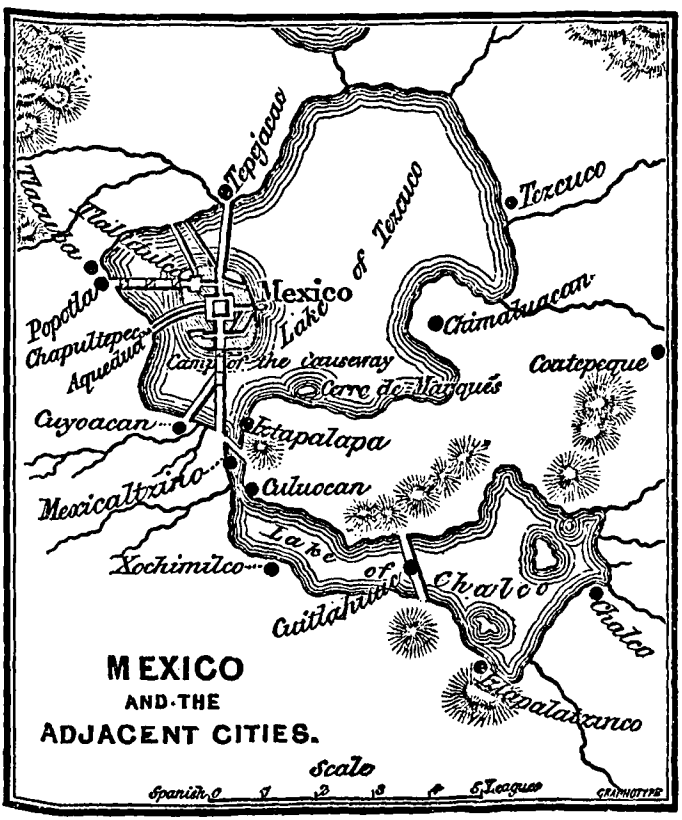
Cortes resolves upon a general attack.

Cortes now determined to make a combined attack upon the city. For this purpose, on the

* Herrera, "Hist. de las Indias," dec. III. lib. i. cap. 17.

† It is impossible to say at what precise time this council took place, for, as may be conceived, we know so much less of what took place amongst the besieged than amongst the besiegers.

eighth or ninth day after the beginning of the siege, he sent for additional forces from the Camp



of Cuyoacan, where he was still obliged to leave a detachment, in order to protect the rear from

any attack that might be made by the inhabitants of Xochimilco, Culuocan, Iztapalapa, Mexicaltzinco, and other places neighbouring to the lake, which had "rebelled," according to Spanish phraseology, that is, which had renewed their allegiance to their old friends and masters, the Mexicans. The combined attack was arranged by Cortes in the following manner. The swordsmen, crossbowmen, and musketeers were to form the advance-guard; they were to be supported by brigantines on both sides of the causeway; and a small body of horse was to keep guard on the causeway in the rear of the foot-soldiers. Some cavalry also were to accompany the attacking force. The number of the allies who, according to his own account, were to march with Cortes on this occasion, amounted to no less than eighty thousand; and the siege was to be pressed at two other points, by the Alguazil Mayor and Pedro de Alvarado. It is manifest, therefore, that the Mexicans would have enough to do on this day.

The general attack commenced.

Cortes moved from the Camp of the Causeway early in the morning. The first obstacle his troops met with was a breach in the causeway, which the Mexicans must have made in the night. The aperture was as broad as a lance is long, and

its depth was equal to its breadth. The Mexicans had also made a barricade on the other side, and were posted behind it. There the battle commenced, and was very stoutly maintained on both sides. At last the Spaniards succeeded in forcing this position, and marched along the causeway, until they came to the entrance of the city, where there was an idol tower, at the foot of which had been a very large bridge—probably, in part, a drawbridge. This had been lifted up, or destroyed, and on the other side a strong barricade had been formed. This point of defence was much stronger than the last, for the breadth of the opening was much greater, and, in fact, it was a very broad water-street (*una calle de agua muy ancha.*) Here, therefore, the Mexicans were strongly posted; but again they were beaten back by the aid of the brigantines, which, it is easy to see, had the great advantage of being able to deploy to the right and the left in the water-street, and so, with their small cannon, cross-bowmen, and musketeers, to take the Mexicans in the flank. By these means they were enabled to dislodge the enemy, which feat, as Cortes himself observes, it would have been impossible to effect without their assistance.

First position of the Mexicans.

Second position.

Brigantines of great service to the Spaniards.

The defenders of the barricade being put to flight, the Spaniards from the brigantines leapt on shore, and, with their assistance, the whole army contrived to pass the water. Here it was that the Indian allies were eminently useful. They were immediately employed in filling up with stones and sun-burnt bricks that part of the water-street which formerly the bridge had spanned; and it is evident that Cortes himself, who always understood where the real difficulty lay in any action, superintended this filling up. His words are, "while *we* filled up this bridge (meaning bridge-way), the Spaniards took another barricade in the great street of the town." For the sake of clearness, I will give a name to this street, and call it the "High Street." It may be noticed, in the most ancient map of Mexico, that there is no difference in the breadth of this street from that of the main causeway. There was no water in it, and, therefore, the Spanish troops were in their element upon it, and could act with force and rapidity. The Mexicans fled until they came to another draw-bridge, which had been taken away, all but one broad beam, over which they passed, and then removed it.

Use of the Indian allies.

On the other side, these resolute and untiring men had thrown up another barricade constructed of clay and sun-burnt bricks. This was a very formidable defence. The Spaniards had now advanced beyond the support of their brigantines; and there was no passing, except by throwing themselves into the water. The houses which commanded the street were crowded with the Mexicans, who showered down missiles from the terraced house-tops; and those who were in charge of the barricade fought like lions. The potent voice, however, of cannon made itself heard above all the noise of the engagement. It was the exact situation in which cannon would come in with the greatest effect, and Cortes had brought two field-pieces with him. The Spaniards seized an opportunity, when the Mexicans gave way before these cannon (which must have swept them down like corn before a tempest), dashed into the water, and passed to the other side. It shows the vigorous resistance which these brave Mexicans made, that it took no less than two hours to wrest this position from them. The barricade, however, being at last deserted, together with the terraces and house-tops, the whole of the

Third position of the Mexicans.

The third position of the Mexicans taken.

assaulting party passed over the bridge-way. Cortes, again, instantly made good the road by filling up the place where the bridge had been, for which materials were ready to his hand in those of the barricade.

The Spanish troops, and all the Indian allies that were not wanted for filling up the bridge-way, pushed on, without encountering any obstacle, for a distance of "two cross-bow shots" in length, until they came to a spot where there was a bridge that adjoined the principal Plaza* in the town—where the best houses were situated. The Mexicans had not imagined that the Spaniards could in one day gain so advanced a position. They had accordingly made no preparations at this bridge. They had neither removed it, nor thrown up a barricade on the other side. The Plaza was so full of Mexicans that it could scarcely hold them. To command its entrance, the Spaniards brought up a cannon, the discharges from which must have made fearful havoc in this crowd; finally, the Spaniards charged into the Plaza, driving the Mexicans

* This spot is marked "Platea" in the ancient map.

before them into the great square of the Temple, which adjoined and communicated with the Plaza. The Spaniards and their allies continued the charge, forced the Mexicans out of the square, occupied it themselves, and took possession of the towers on the Temple.

The Plaza occupied by the Spaniards,

Then the temple.

The Mexicans, however, perceiving that the Spaniards had no horsemen with them, turned upon their enemies with immense vigour, dislodged them from the towers, drove them from the great court of the Temple, swept on with irresistible fury, cleared the Spaniards out of the Plaza and into the High Street again, at the same time capturing the single field-piece which had done so much mischief. The Spaniards were retreating in much confusion, when "it pleased God," as Cortes says, "that three horsemen should enter the Plaza." The Mexicans seem to have had a most unreasonable dread of horses. If Montezuma, in his immense collection of animals, had possessed but one horse, and the people had learnt what a docile, timid slave a horse is, the Conquest of Mexico would have been postponed for some time—perhaps to another generation. At this juncture, however, the

The Mexicans turn upon the enemy and drive them back.

Mexicans were not afraid of these three horsemen alone, but, seeing them enter the narrow pathway, supposed them to be the front rank of a body of horse. They, accordingly, retreated in their turn. The Spaniards, from being the pursued, became the pursuers; some of them re-entered the great square; and a fight took place on the summit of the Temple between four or five Spaniards and ten or twelve of the chief men among the Mexicans, which ended in the defeat and slaughter of all these chiefs. A few more horsemen now entered the square, which by this time was probably clear of the Mexicans; and these Spaniards contrived an ambuscade, which was successful, and by which thirty Mexicans were killed.

Spaniards successful again.

It was now evening, and Cortes gave orders for the recall of the troops; but this backward movement was not executed without considerable danger, for, though the Mexicans must have suffered terribly that day, "the dogs came on so rabidly" (*venian los perros tan rabiosos*), that even the dreaded horsemen could not drive them back or prevent them from molesting the rear-guard of the Spaniards. They, however, reached the

Camp of the Causeway in safety, their chief triumph in the day's work being, that they had burnt the principal houses in the High Street. The Spaniards, therefore, would have nothing to dread next time from the terraces of these houses. Result of the day's work.

I have been thus minute in describing this day's proceedings, in order that the narrative may serve to explain future encounters, and give the reader some idea of the defences of Mexico, and of the means of attack which the Spaniards had in their power.

There was rest in the Camp of the Causeway for a day or two; but these were very gainful days for Cortes, as not only did his new friend and ally, the King of Tezcuco, send him thirty thousand warriors under the command of his brother Ixtlilxochitl, called by Cortes "Istrisuchil," but (such are the charms of success!) the inhabitants of Xochimilco and of certain *pueblos* of the Otomies, who were the slaves of the King of Mexico, joined the ranks of the besiegers.

Cortes, finding that he had more brigantines than he needed, assigned three to Sandoval and three to Alvarado. He then prepared for an-

other great attack upon the city, telling his new Indian allies that they must now show whether they really were friends.

A second great attack.

Early in the morning, on the fourth day after the entrance into the city above recorded, Cortes commenced his second attack, accompanied by a very large body of his Indian allies (*que era infinita gente*). The short respite, however, which the Mexicans had enjoyed in these three days, had enabled them to undo all that the Spaniards had done, and to make all the defences much stronger. The result was, that the Spaniards did not advance further than the Plaza,—though there, and in its neighbourhood, they perpetrated an act of destruction which went to the hearts of the Mexicans. Cortes says that the determination manifested by the Mexicans on this day convinced him of two things:—that there would be very little spoil, and that the Mexicans would have to be totally destroyed.* His efforts, there-

* "Viendo que estos de la Ciudad estaban rebeldes, y mostraban tanta determinacion de morir, ó defenderse, colegí de ellos dos cosas: la una, que habiamos de haber poca, ó ninguna de la riqueza, que nos habian tomado; y la otra, que daban ocasion, y nos forzaban á que totalmente les destruyessemos."—LORENZANA, p. 254.

fore, were now directed to see how he could mortify and depress them most, and so bring them, as he says, to a perception of their error. With this view, he on this day caused the palace of Montezuma's father to be destroyed, that palace where the Spaniards had been so hospitably received on their first coming to Mexico. The Spaniards also destroyed some adjacent buildings, which, though they were somewhat smaller than the palace, were even more delightful and beautiful (*mas frescas y gentiles*), and in which Montezuma had placed his aviary. This destruction must have been a pitiable sight, and Cortes was doubtless sincere in expressing great regret at being obliged to have recourse to such a proceeding. He had, however, the conqueror's ready excuse, that, though it distressed him, it distressed the enemy much more.* Having set fire to these buildings, the Spaniards retired, the Mexicans attacking them in the rear with great

The palace of Montezuma's father destroyed.

Also the Aviary.

* "Y aunque á mí me pesó mucho de ello, porque á ellos les pesaba mucho mas, determiné de las quemar, de que los Enemigos mostraron harto pesar, y tambien los otros sus Aliados de las Ciudades de la Laguna."—LORENZANA, p. 255.

fury. But the culminating point of vexation for the Mexicans, on that day, must have been to see their former slaves, the Otomies, ranged against them. Bitter were the cannibal threats which passed between the Mexicans and the Indian allies of the Spaniards.

The next day, very early, after having heard mass, which was never omitted, the Spaniards returned to the attack, and, early though it was, the indefatigable Mexicans had repaired two-thirds of all that the Spaniards had destroyed on the preceding day. The Spaniards obtained no signal success this day, nor indeed for many days together, though each day they destroyed much, and made some further advance into the town. This comparative slowness of movement is partly to be accounted for by their ammunition falling short. Notwithstanding this, the Spanish division under Cortes succeeded in taking several bridges which were in one of the principal streets,—namely, that which led to Tlacuba. It was a great object to gain this street, in order to effect a communication between the two camps of Cortes and Alvarado. Each day, the proceedings were very much like those on the first day, which I

have described in detail. In the evening the Spaniards retreated, and then the Mexicans pursued them fiercely; "gluttonously" is the apt word which Cortes employs in speaking of this cannibal people.*

Meanwhile, the inhabitants of the cities bordering on the lake, appreciating the success of the Spanish General, came and demanded pardon for their past offences, and offered alliance for the future. Cortes employed them most usefully in providing some shelter for his troops encamped on the causeway. He takes this opportunity of illustrating, in his letter to Charles the Fifth, the magnitude of the causeway, stating that the little town which was built to shelter the Spaniards and their allies, in all two thousand men,† was placed entirely on the causeway, there being room for a house on each side, and for a road between, which was sufficiently wide for men and horses to move along it "much at their ease."‡

New alliances.

Magnitude of the causeway.

---

* "Como ellos venían tan golosos tras nosotros."—LORENZANA, p. 258.

† The main body was always stationed at Cuyoacan.

‡ "Y vea Vuestra Magestad, que tan ancha puede ser la Calzada, que va por lo mas hondo de la Laguna, que

It remains now to be seen what the other divisions of the besiegers had been able to effect; and as, fortunately, Bernal Diaz was in Alvarado's division, we have a good account of what took place in that quarter. Their hardships and difficulties seem to have exceeded those of the division which Cortes commanded. They were not so much molested from the flat roofs of houses; but the breaches in the causeway on their side were more formidable, and their first attacks were made without the support of any brigantines. Bernal Diaz gives a vivid picture of the severe toils and hardships they had to endure. He speaks of their many wounds,* of the hail of darts, arrows, and stones, which they had to encounter, of the mortification of finding, after they had gained some bridge-way or barricade with great labour in the course of any day,

Trials of the men in Alvarado's division.

de la una parte, y de la otra iban estas Casas, y quedaba en medio hecha Calle, que muy á placer á pié, y á caballo ibamos, y veníamos por ella."—LORENZANA, p. 260.

* Each day a new standard-bearer was required. "Pues quiero dezir de nuestros Capitanes, y Alfereces, y compañeros de vandera, que saliamos llenos de heridas, y las vanderas rotas, y digo, que cada dia aviamos menester un Alferez."—BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 151.

that the same work had to be done again the next morning. He also mentions the poorness of their food, which consisted of maize cakes, some herbs called *quilites*, and cherries. He describes the unwearied resolution and the craft of the Mexicans: how they dug deep pits underneath the water, so that the Spaniards, in their daily retreats, might unadvisedly fall into them; and how they drove stakes into the bed of the lake, which prevented the brigantines from approaching.

At last, Alvarado took a step somewhat similar to that which Cortes had adopted from the first, namely, making a small camp on the causeway, in a spot very similar to that which Cortes had chosen, where there were some idol-towers, and an open place in which the Spaniards could build their huts. These huts, however, having been hastily thrown up, were no defence against the wet; and, after a hard day's fighting the soldiers had to tend their wounds* amidst rain,

* The division of Pedro de Alvarado had, however, one great advantage in a soldier named Juan Catalan, who cured wounds by making the sign of the cross over them, and by incantation. "Un soldado que se dezia Juan Catalan que nos las santiguava, y ensalmava, y

wind, and cold, which they did in the roughest manner, burning them with hot oil, and then compressing them with the blankets of the country, after which they ate, amid great heaps of mud, what Bernal Diaz calls, "those wretched maize cakes" (*essa miséria de tortillas*).

Of these things, however, they would probably have thought but little, but for the extreme severity of the out-post duty, which was managed in the following manner. When they had taken any barricade, bridge, or difficult pass, forty soldiers kept guard there from evening until midnight; these were then relieved by forty other soldiers, who watched from midnight until two o'clock. This second watch was called, in the Spanish armies, "the watch of lethargy," or more generally, as soldiers are given to be brief, "the lethargy" (*la modorra*). The first forty soldiers, when relieved, were not allowed to return to the camp, but lay down where they were, and went

Mode of relieving guard.

---

verdaderamente digo, que hallavamos que Nuestro Señor Jesu Christo era servido de darnos esfuerço demas de las muchas mercedes que cada dia nos hazia, y de presto sanavan."—BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 151. In those days any escape from a regular practitioner was a great blessing.

to sleep. At two o'clock another company of forty soldiers relieved guard in the same fashion, so that at break of day there were a hundred and twenty soldiers at the pass. On those nights when an attack was apprehended, which was often the case, the whole company watched throughout the night.

It may easily be imagined that soldiers enduring daily such hardships would make tremendous efforts to bring the siege to a conclusion, which would sometimes be very imprudent and lead to signal reverses. So it fared with Alvarado's troops, for whom the Mexicans laid a very crafty ambuscade. In a deep and broad aperture of the causeway, where there had been a bridge, they made holes, and, at the same time, placed stakes to prevent the brigantines from acting, also fortifying the side of the aperture which they occupied. They then disposed their force in the following manner. They posted one division at the aperture; another at a spot within the town; and a third was appointed to take the Spaniards in the rear from Tlacuba.* The attack

The Mexicans prepare an ambuscade for Alvarado's troops.

* It would seem, therefore, that the investment of

then commenced. The Spaniards repelled the first division of the Mexicans, and passed over this aperture at a spot where it was tolerably easy to ford, and where the holes had not been dug. Meanwhile, the third division of the Mexicans, acting in the rear, occupied all the attention of the Spanish cavalry. Alvarado, unlike the prudent Cortes, had not taken any step to see that a road lay open for retreat, and nothing was done to the aperture after it had been passed by the infantry. The victorious Spaniards pressed forwards into the town, gained two barricades, and found themselves in the midst of some large houses* and oratory towers. At this spot, nu-

---

Mexico was yet incomplete, unless, indeed, there was some side street unobserved by the Spaniards, by which the Mexicans could approach that part of the causeway which was near Alvarado's camp.

* It is very desirable, both for the purposes of this siege, and also in order to understand the degree of civilization to which the Mexicans had attained in some things, to try and form some idea of their houses. The best account of a Mexican house which I have met with, is to be found in the letter sent by the town council of Vera Cruz to Charles the Fifth, immediately after the founding of that town. This account had reference only to the houses in the country towns, or in the country,

merous bands of warriors poured out from their hiding-place; those Mexicans who had fled before the Spaniards, having drawn them on sufficiently, now turned upon them; and the

---

which the expedition had seen on its way from Cozumel to Vera Cruz. It begins thus: "There are certain large and well-arranged *pueblos*: the houses, in those parts where they have stone, are built of lime and squared stone; and the rooms are small and low, very much after the Moorish fashion (*muy amoriscados*); and in those parts where they have no stone, they build their houses of sun-burnt bricks, and plaster them over, and the roofs are of straw. There are houses belonging to the chiefs which are very airy, and with many rooms, for we have seen more than six court-yards (*patois*) in some houses, and the apartments very well arranged—each principal service by itself ("*cada principal servicio que ha de ser por si;*" and within the houses are wells and tanks (*albergas*) also rooms for the slaves and people of service, of whom they have many. Outside these houses, at the entrance, there is a large raised court, or even more than one, ascended by steps, and very well built, where they have their mosques, and their oratories, and their terraced walks, which go all round, and are very broad, and there they keep their idols, made of stone, or wood, or clay."—*Doc. Inéd.*, tom. i. p. 454.

It may be conjectured that many of the private houses in the capital were still better built: and it will be easily seen that such houses were soon convertible into fortresses. Peter Martyr, obtaining his intelligence from

Alvarado's division put to flight.

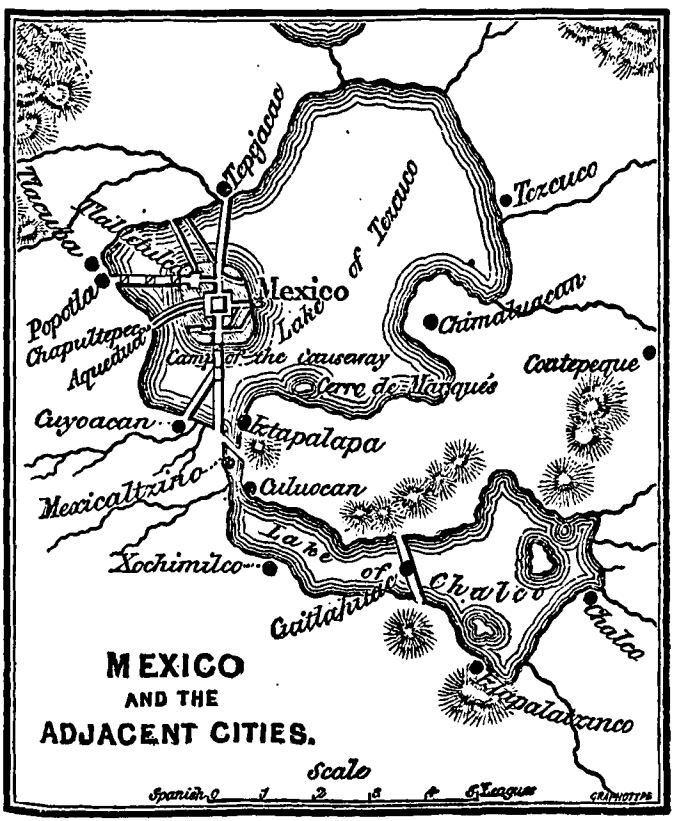
Spaniards, unable to resist the combined attack, were soon put to flight. On fighting their way back to the great aperture, they found that the fordable part of it was occupied by a fleet of canoes, and that it was necessary to pass where the Mexicans had made the passage most dangerous. Here the enemy succeeded in laying hold of five Spaniards (it was always their object to take them alive for sacrifice), and the historian himself with much difficulty escaped from their grasp. He tells us, that when he reached dry land he fell senseless, overcome by the loss of blood, and by the exertions he had made; "And I say," he adds, "that when they clawed hold of me, in thought I commended myself to Our Lord God and to Our Lady his Blessed Mother, and I put forth my strength, whereby I saved myself, thanks be to God for the mercies which he shows unto me."

The Mexicans, emboldened by their success, made a vigorous attack upon Alvarado's camp that day, but were repelled by cannon.

---

one of the messengers sent to Charles the Fifth by Cortes, says that the roofs of the Mexican houses were made of a bituminous substance: "Tecta non tegulis sed bitumine quodam terreo vestiunt."—Dec. v. cap. 10.

Cortes was very angry when he heard of this disaster, and gave orders that, henceforward, on



no occasion should the Spaniards advance without securing a pathway for their retreat. He went over himself to see Alvarado's camp. But when

Three-fourths of the city taken.

he found how much they had done, and how far they had advanced, he could not blame them, he said, as much as he had done. In truth, by this time, three-fourths of the city had been taken, that is, three-fourths in magnitude, but not in density, for the densest part of the population lay in the district of the city, called Tlatelulco, round about the market-place, which was the oldest part of the town.

The camp of Gonsalvo de Sandoval was not blessed with a chronicler, and so we do not know anything of what passed in it; but we may conclude, from the well-approved valour of its commander, that it was a worthy rival to the others in heroic deeds.

The great aperture, which had already cost several lives to Alvarado's division, was not filled up without the loss of six more Spanish soldiers and four days of time. No mention is made of the loss of the Tlascalans, which, no doubt, was very severe, for they fought with exceeding bravery * throughout the war; but in any retreat—and the

* "Nuestros amigos los de Tlascala nos ayudavan en toda la guerra mui como varones."—BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 151.

close of each day was generally a retreat with the Spaniards—these allies were a terrible embarrassment, and the first object was to clear the causeway of them before the Mexicans came down with the final tiger-like* spring with which they were wont to wind up the day's fighting.

It must not be supposed that the check which Alvarado's division had received, was altogether owing to his thoughtlessness. There was a keen rivalry amongst the several divisions; and it was a point of honour with them, which should gain the market-place first. Now, to enter the market-place, it was necessary to penetrate amongst an "infinite" number of *azoteas*, bridges, and broken causeways: indeed, each house was a sort of island fortress.† The commanders had to endure much importunity from their men: "Why not," they doubtless exclaimed, "make a continuous attack, instead of withdrawing in this way each day, and

The common soldiers impatient.

* "Venian tan bravosos como tigres, y pié con pié se juntaron con nosotros."—BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 151.

† "En tal manera, que en cada Casa, por donde habiamos de ir, estaba hecha como Isla en medio de el Agua."—LORENZANA, p. 263.

having so much of our work to do over and over again?" Cortes himself felt that remarks of this kind would occur to any reader of his despatches; and, accordingly, he informs the Emperor, that what looked so feasible could not be done, for two reasons. If they did not retreat at night-fall, as had been their practice, they must either move their camp into the Plaza, or into the square of the great Temple, and thus they would be in the midst of the enemy, and liable to attack from morning till night. Or, on the other hand, they must keep their camp where it was, and establish outposts at the passes which they gained,—and if this latter alternative were adopted, he thought there would be too much work for the men, and such as they could not endure.* It may be inferred from this explanation, that Cortes was

Reasons of Cortes for retreating every evening.

---

* "Porque teniendo el Real en la Ciudad cada noche, y cada hora, como ellos eran muchos, y nosotros pocos, nos dieran mil rebatos, y pelearan con nosotros, y fuera el trabajo incomportable, y podian darnos por muchas partes. Pues guardar las Puentes Gente de noche, quedaban los Españoles tan cansados de pelear el día, que no se podia sufrir poner Gente en guarda de ellos." —LORENZANA, p. 257.

more careful of his troops than Alvarado of his: we have already seen what severe watches were requisite in that division, and how ill the men fared.

The impatience of the soldiers grew to a great height, and was supported in an official quarter, —by no less a person than Alderete, the King's Treasurer. Cortes gave way, against his own judgment, to their importunities. There had all along been a reason for his reluctance, which, probably, he did not communicate to his men: namely, that he had not abandoned the hope that the enemy would still come to terms. "Finally," he says, "they pressed me so much that I gave way."

A general attack resolved upon.

The attack was to be a general one, in which the divisions of Sandoval and Alvarado were to co-operate; but Cortes, with that knowledge of character which belonged to him, particularly explained, that, though his general orders were for them to press into the market-place, they were not obliged to gain a single difficult pass which laid them open to defeat; "For," he says, "I knew, from the men they were, that they would advance to whatever spot I told them to

gain, even if they knew that it would cost them their lives."*

On the appointed day, Cortes moved from his camp, supported by seven brigantines, and by more than three thousand canoes filled with his Indian allies. When his soldiers reached the entrance of the city, he divided them in the following manner. There were three streets which led to the market-place from the position which the Spaniards had already gained. Along the principal street, the King's Treasurer, with seventy Spaniards, and fifteen or twenty thousand allies, was to make his way. His rear was to be protected by a small guard of horsemen.

Dispositions on the side of Cortes for the attack.

The other two streets were smaller, and led from the street of Tlacuba to the market-place. Along the broader of these two streets, Cortes sent two of his principal captains, with eighty Spaniards and ten thousand Indians; he himself, with eight horsemen, seventy-five foot-soldiers, twenty-five musketeers, and an "infinite number"

---

* "Conocia de sus Personas, que habian de poner el rostro, donde yo les dijesse, aunque supiessen perder las vidas."—LORENZANA, p. 265.

of allies, was to enter the narrower street. At the entrance to the street of Tlacuba, he left two large cannon with eight horsemen to guard them, and at the entrance of his own street, he also left eight horsemen to protect the rear.

The great attack commenced.

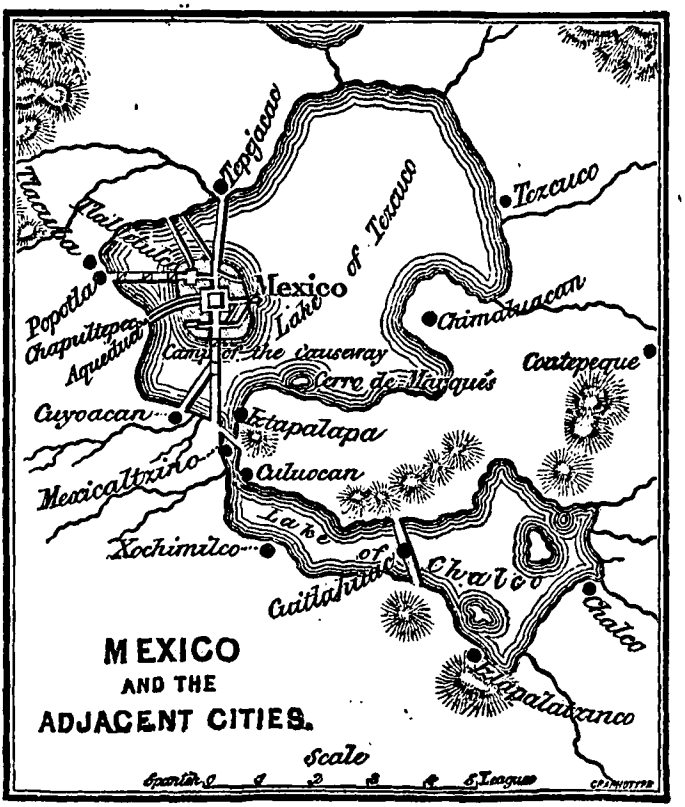
The Spaniards and their allies made their entrance into the city with even more success and less embarrassment than on previous occasions. Bridges and barricades were gained, and the three main bodies of the army moved forwards into the heart of the city. The ever-prudent Cortes did not follow his division, but remained with a small body-guard of twenty Spaniards in a little island formed by the intersection of certain water streets, whence he encouraged the allies, who were occasionally beaten back by the Mexicans, and where he could protect his own troops against any sudden descent of the enemy from certain side streets.

Cortes in an islet.

His men ask leave to press on into the city.

He now received a message from those Spanish troops who had made a rapid and successful advance into the heart of the town, informing him that they were not far from the market-place, and that they wished to have his permission to push onwards, as they already heard the noise of

the combats which the Alguazil Mayor and Pedro de Alvarado were waging from their respective



stations. To this message Cortes returned for answer that on no account should they move

forwards without first filling up the apertures thoroughly. They sent an answer back, stating that they had made completely passable all the ground they had gained; and that he might come and see whether it were not so.

Cortes, like a wise commander, not inclined to admit anything as a fact upon the statement of others which could be verified by personal inspection, took them at their word, and did move on to see what sort of pathway they had made; when, to his dismay, he came in sight of a breach in the causeway, of considerable magnitude, being ten or twelve paces in width, and which, far from being filled up with solid material, had been passed upon wood and reeds, and was entirely insecure in case of retreat. The Spaniards, "intoxicated with victory," as their Commander describes them, had rushed on, imagining that they left behind them a sufficient pathway.

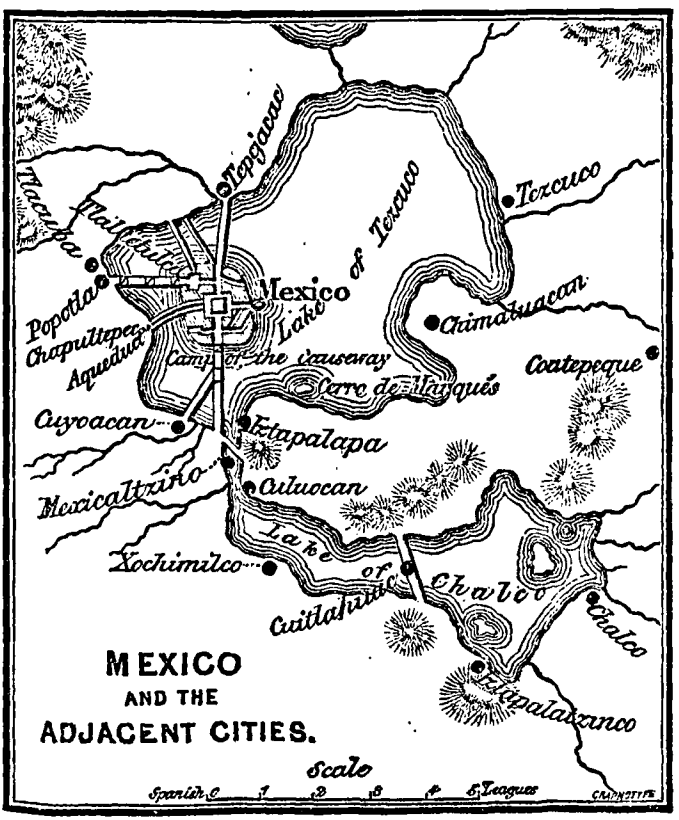
They had not made good the pathway.

There was now no time to remedy this lamentable error, for when Cortes arrived near this "bridge of affliction," as he calls it, he saw many of the Spaniards and the allies retreating towards it, and when he came up close to it, he found the bridge-way broken down, and the whole

aperture so full of Spaniards and Indians, that there was not room for a straw to float upon the surface of the water. The peril was so imminent, that Cortes not only thought that the Conquest of Mexico was gone, but that the term of his life as well as of his victories had come; and he resolved to die there fighting. All that he could do at first was to help his men out of the water; and, meanwhile, the Mexicans charged upon them in such numbers, that he and his little party were entirely surrounded. The enemy seized upon his person, and would have carried him off, but for the resolute bravery of some of his guard, one of whom lost his life there in succouring his master. The greatest aid, however, that Cortes had at this moment of urgent peril, was the cruel superstition of the Mexicans, which made them wish to take Malinché alive, and grudge the death of an enemy in any other way than that of sacrifice to their detestable gods. The captain of the body-guard seized hold of Cortes, and insisted upon his retreating, declaring that upon his life depended the lives of all of them. Cortes, though at the moment he felt that he should have delighted more in death than life,

Cortes in urgent peril.

gave way to the importunity of this captain, and of other Spaniards who were near, and commenced



a retreat for his life. His flight was along a narrow causeway at the same level as the water, an

additional circumstance of danger, which, to use his expression about them, those "dogs" had contrived against the Spaniards. The Mexican canoes approached this causeway on both sides, and the slaughter they were thus enabled to commit, both among the allies and the Spaniards, was very great. Meanwhile, two or three horses were sent to aid Cortes in his retreat, and a youth upon one of them contrived to reach him, though the others were lost. At last he and a few of his men succeeded in fighting their way to the broad street of Tlacuba, where, like a brave captain, instead of continuing his flight, he and the few horsemen who were with him turned round and formed a rear-guard to protect his retreating troops. He also sent immediate orders to the King's Treasurer and the other commanders to make good their retreat; orders the force of which was much heightened by the sight of two or three Spaniards' heads which the Mexicans, who were fighting behind a barricade, threw amongst the besiegers.

His escape.

Cortes gains the street of Tlacuba.

We must now see how it fared with the other divisions. Alvarado's men had prospered in their attack, and were steadily advancing towards the market-place, when, all of a sudden, they found

Alvarado's division.

themselves encountered by an immense body of Mexican troops, splendidly accoutred, who threw before them five heads of Spaniards, and kept shouting out "Thus will we slay you, as we have slain Malinché and Sandoval, whose heads these are." With these words they commenced an attack of such fury, and came so closely to hand with the Spaniards, that they could not use their cross-bows, their muskets, nor even their swords. One thing, however, was in their favour. The difficulty of their retreat was always greatly enhanced by the number of their allies; but on this occasion the Tlascalans no sooner saw the bleeding heads, and heard the menacing words of the Mexicans, than they cleared themselves off the causeway with all possible speed.

The Tlascalans retreat in haste.

The Spaniards, therefore, were able to retreat in good order; and their dismay did not take the form of panic, even when they heard from the summit of the Temple the tones of that awful drum made of serpents' skin, which gave forth the most melancholy sound imaginable, and which was audible at two or three leagues' distance.* This

* "Tañian un atambor de mui triste sonido, en fin

was the signal of sacrifice, and at that moment ten human hearts, the hearts of their companions, were being offered up to the Mexican deities.

The Mexican King sounds his horn.

A more dangerous, though not more dreadful, sound was now to be heard. This was the blast of a horn sounded by no less a personage than the Mexican King — which signified that his captains were to succeed or die. The mad fury with which the Mexican troops now rushed upon the Spaniards was "an awful thing" to see; and the historian, who was present at the scene, writing in his old age, exclaims, that, though he cannot describe it, yet, when he comes to think of it, it is as if it were "visibly" before him,* so deep was the impression it had made upon his mind.

But the Spaniards were not raw troops; and terror, however great, was not able to overcome their sense of discipline and their duty to each other as comrades. It was in vain that the Mexi-

---

como instrumento de demonios, y retumbava tanto, que se oia dos, ó tres leguas, y juntamente con él muchos atabalejos."—BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 152.

* "Con qué rabia y esfuerço se metian entre nosotros á nos echar mano, es cosa de espanto, porque yo no lo sé aquí escrivir, que aora que me pongo á pensar en ello, es como si visiblemente lo viesse."—BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 152.

cans rushed upon them "as a conquered thing" (*como cosa vencida*); they reached their station, served their cannon steadily—although they had to renew their artillerymen,—and maintained their ground.

The appalling stratagem adopted by the Mexicans—of throwing down before one division of the Spanish army some of the heads of the prisoners they had taken from another division, and shouting that these were the heads of the principal commanders—was pursued with great success. They were thus enabled to discourage Sandoval, and to cause him to retreat with loss towards his quarters. They even tried with success the same stratagem upon Cortes, throwing before his camp, to which he had at last retreated, certain bleeding heads, which, they said, were those of "Tonatiuh" (Alvarado), Sandoval, and the other *teules*. Then it was that Cortes felt more dismay than ever, "though," says the honest chronicler, who did not like the man, however much he admired the soldier, "not in such a manner that those who were with him should perceive in it much weakness."*

Sandoval's division retires.

* "Entonces dizen, que desmayó Cortés mucho mas

After Sandoval had made good his retreat, he set off, accompanied by a few horsemen, for the camp of Cortes, and had an interview with him, of which the following account is given. "O Señor Captain! what is this?" exclaimed Sandoval; "are these the great counsels, and the artifices of war which you have always been wont to show us? How has this disaster happened?" Cortes replied, "O son Sandoval! my sins have permitted this; but I am not so culpable in the business as they may make out, for it is the fault of the Treasurer, Juan de Alderete, whom I charged to fill up that difficult pass where they routed us, but he did not do so, for he is not accustomed to wars, nor to be commanded by superior officers." At this point of the conference, the Treasurer himself, who had approached the captains in order to learn Sandoval's news, exclaimed, that it was Cortes himself who was to blame; that he had encouraged his men to go forward; that he had not charged them to fill up the bridges and bad

Meeting of Sandoval and Cortes after the defeat.

---

de lo que antes estava él, y los que consigo traia, mas no de manera que sintiessen en él mucha flaqueza."—Bernal Diaz, cap. 152.

passes,—if he had done so, he (the Treasurer) with his company would have done it;—and, moreover, that Cortes had not cleared the causeway in time, of his Indian allies. Thus they argued and disputed with one another; for hardly anyone is generous in defeat to those with whom he has acted. Indeed, a generosity of this kind, which will not allow a man to comment severely upon the errors of his comrades in misfortune, is so rare a virtue, that it scarcely seems to belong to this planet.

How few remain gentlemen after defeat.

There was little time, however, for altercation, and Cortes was not the man to indulge in more of that luxury for the unfortunate than human nature demanded. He had received no tidings of what had befallen the Camp of Tlacuba, and thither he despatched Sandoval, embracing him and saying, "Look you, since you see that I cannot go to all parts, I commend these labours to you, for, as you perceive, I am wounded and lame. I implore you, take charge of these three camps.* I well know that Pedro de Alvarado

* "Mirá, pues veis que yo no puedo ir á todas partes, á vos os encomiendo estos trabajos, pues veis que estoi

and his soldiers will have behaved themselves as cavaliers, but I fear lest the great force of those dogs should have routed them."

Sandoval at Alvarado's camp.

The scene now changes to the ground near Alvarado's camp. Sandoval succeeded in making his way there, and arrived about the hour of Vespers. He found the men of that division in the act of repelling a most vigorous attack on the part of the Mexicans, who had hoped that night to penetrate into the camp and to carry off all the Spaniards for sacrifice. The enemy were better armed than usual, some of them using the weapons which they had taken from the soldiers of Cortes. At last, after a severe conflict, in which Sandoval himself was wounded, and in which the cannon shots did not suffice to break the serried ranks of the Mexicans,* the Spaniards gained their quarters, and, being under shelter, had some respite from the fury of the Mexican attack.

There, Sandoval, Pedro de Alvarado, and the other principal captains, were standing together

---

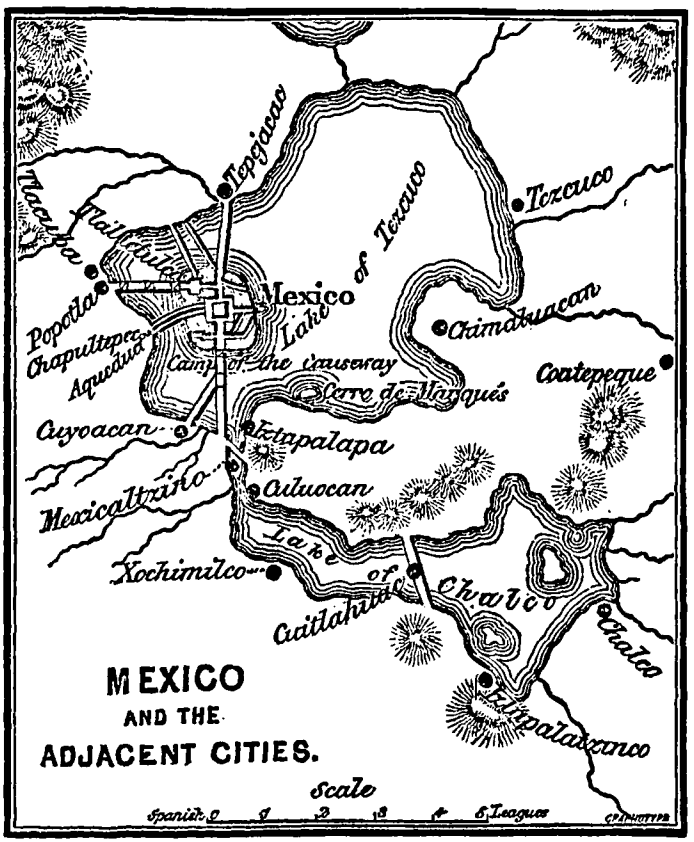
herido y coxo; ruego os pongais cobro en estos tres reales."—BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 152.

* "Por mas Mexicanos que llevavan las pelotas, no les podian apartar."—BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 152.

and relating what had occurred to each of them, when, suddenly, the sound of the sacrificial drum was heard again, accompanied by other musical instruments of a similar dolorous character. From the Camp of Tlacuba the great Temple was perfectly visible, and, when the Spaniards looked up at it for an interpretation of these melancholy tones, they saw their companions driven by blows and buffetings up to the place of sacrifice. The white-skinned Christians were easily to be distinguished amidst the dusky groups that surrounded them. When the unhappy men about to be sacrificed had reached the lofty level space on which these abominations were wont to be committed, it was discerned by their friends and late companions that plumes of feathers were put upon the heads of many of them, and that men, whose movements in the distance appeared like those of winnowers, made the captives dance before the image of Huitzilopochtli. When the dance was concluded, the victims were placed upon the sacrificial stones; their hearts were taken out and offered to the idols; and their bodies hurled down the steps of the Temple. At the bottom of the steps stood "other butchers" who cut off the

Alvarado's men behold the sacrifice of their companions.

arms and legs of the victims, intending to eat these portions of their enemies. The skin of the



face with the beard was preserved. The rest of the body was thrown to the lions, tigers, and ser-

pents. "Let the curious readers consider," says the chronicler, "what pity we must have had for these, our companions, and how we said to one another, 'Oh! thanks be to God, that they did not carry me off to-day to sacrifice me.'"* And certainly no army ever looked upon a more deplorable sight.

There was no time, however, for much contemplation; for, at that instant, numerous bands of warriors attacked the Spaniards on all sides, and fully occupied their attention in the preservation of their own lives.

In modern battles no dialogue.

Modern warfare has lost one great element of the picturesque in narrative, namely, in there being no interchange now of verbal threats and menaces between the contending parties; but in those days it was otherwise, and the Mexicans were able to indulge in the most fierce and malignant language. "Look," they said, "that is the way in which all of you have to die, for our gods have promised this to us many times." To the

* "Miren los curiosos Lectores que esto leyeren, que lástima terniamos dellos: y deziamos entre nostros: O gracias á Dios, que no me llevaron á mí oy á sacrificar." —Bernal Diaz, cap. 152.

Tlascalans their language was more insulting, and much more minutely descriptive. Throwing to them the roasted flesh of their companions and of the Spanish soldiers, they shouted, "Eat of the flesh of these *teules*, and of your brothers, for we are quite satiated with it; and, look you, for the houses you have pulled down, we shall have to make you build in their place much better ones with stones, and plates of metal, likewise with hewn stone and lime; and the houses will be painted.* Wherefore, continue to assist these *teules*, all of whom you will see sacrificed."

The losses of the Spaniards.

The Mexicans, however, did not succeed in carrying off any more Spaniards for sacrifice that night. The Spanish camp had some few hours of repose, and some time to reckon up their losses, which were very considerable. They lost upwards of sixty of their own men, six horses, two cannon, and a great number of their Indian allies. Moreover, the brigantines had not fared much better on this disastrous day than the land forces.

* "Y mirad que las casas que aveis derrocado, que os hemos de traer para que las torneis á hazer mui mejores, y con piedras y planchas, y cal y canto, y pintadas."—Bernal Diaz, cap. 152.

But the indirect consequences of this defeat were still more injurious than the actual losses. The allies from the neighbouring cities on the lake deserted the Spaniards, nearly to a man. The Mexicans regained and strengthened most of their positions; and the greatest part of the work of the besiegers seemed as if it would have to be done over again. Even the Tlascalans, hitherto so faithful, despaired of the fortunes of their allies, and could not but believe, with renewed terror, in the potency of the Mexican deities, kindred to, if not identical with, their own. Accordingly they departed to their homes; and in the camp of Cortes no Indian remained but Ixtlilxochitl, the brother of the King of Tezcuco, with about forty friends and relations,—in the camp of Sandoval, the Cacique of Huaxocingo with about fifty men, —and in Pedro de Alvarado's camp, the brave Chichimecatl with two other chiefs and eighty Tlascalans. In a word, not more than two men out of every thousand of the allies remained to aid the Spaniards.

Desertion of the allies.

CHAPTER XII.

Consequences of the Defeat—The Siege languishes—Cortes sends aid to his Indian Allies—The Allies return to the Camp of Cortes—The Siege is pressed—The Mexicans will not treat with Cortes—Mexico is taken.

The Mexican King encourages his tributaries.

THE King of the Mexicans improved his victory by sending round the news of it to his tributaries, informing them how successful he had been, assuring them that he would soon destroy the rest of the Spaniards, and begging them on no account to make peace with the enemy. The vouchers which his messengers carried were two heads of horses and some heads of Christians; and these trophies told the tale of victory in an undeniable manner.

One cannot always sympathize with one's Christian friends, and it is impossible not to feel occasionally some satisfaction when the be-

leaguered party, wronged as they had been in every way by the besiegers, and making one of the most gallant defences ever known in the history of sieges, should gain some advantage. The siege was not absolutely stopped on account of this defeat, but still the city had some relief. In the camp of Alvarado, for instance, where the men had seen but too clearly what was the fate of captives, there was no movement for four days; and, strange to say, the first attack on that side was, according to Cortes, devised and led by Chichimecatl, the brave Tlascalan. In the camp of Cortes little was attempted, and less effected, for ten days; and no entrance was made by the Spaniards which reached so far into the city as the Plaza, a spot which had been gained by them, as may be recollected, at an early stage of the proceedings.

The siege languishes.

The main cause, however, of this apparent inactivity is one which will surprise the reader; but which, when well considered, will give him a great insight into the depth of policy of Cortes. At such a juncture an ordinary commander would have kept all his resources closely about him, and would not have been induced to send away a

Cortes sends assistance to his Indian allies.

single man. But Cortes sent out a considerable force to assist his Indian allies of the town of Cuernavaca, who were suffering from the attack of some hostile Indians of a neighbouring city belonging to the Mexican faction. His own men disapproved of this, as it was natural that they should, and said that it was destruction to take men from the camp.*

Cortes also sent assistance to the Otomies, who were much pressed by the inhabitants of the province of Matalcingo, a people on whose succour the Mexicans at that time placed great dependence.

The expeditions mentioned above were successful. The wounded men in the camp began to recover.† By great good fortune Cortes, at

---

* "Tube mucha contradicion, y decian que me destruia en sacar Gente del Real."—LORENZANA, p. 272.

† The few Spanish women who were present at this siege, and of whom honorable mention ought to be made, must have been a great comfort to the wounded Spanish soldiers. One of them, named Beatriz de Palacios, a mulatto, was not only useful in nursing the sick, but she would saddle the horses of her husband's troop, and was known to take his place as sentinel. "Beatriz de Palacios, Mulata, aiudó mucho, quando fué hechado Cortés

this juncture, received some gunpowder and some cross-bows from his town of Villa Rica; and the siege was recommenced.

The politic conduct of Cortes in sending succours to those of his Indian allies who were endangered, must have done good service in bringing them all back to his camp. They began to flock in; and, after receiving a lecture from Cortes, in which he told them that they were deserving of

The Indian allies return to the camp.

---

de México. y en este Cerco : era casada con un Soldado, dicho Pedro de Escobar; y sirvió tanto á su Marido, y á los de su Camarada, que hallándose cansado de pelear de Dia, tocándole la Guarda, y Centinela, la hacia por él, con mucho cuidado, y en dexando las Armas, salia al Campo á recoger Bledos, y los tenia cocidos, y adereçados, para su Marido, y los Compañeros. Curaba los Heridos, ensillaba los Caballos, y hacia otras cosas, como qualquiera Soldado; y esta, y otras fueron las que curaron á Cortés, y sus Compañeros, quando llegaron heridos á Tlaxcalla, y les hicieron de vestir, de Lienço de la Tierra, y las que queriendo Cortés, que se quedasen á descansar á Tlaxcalla, le dixeron: que no era bien, que Mugeres Castellanas, dexasen á sus Maridos, yendo á la Guerra, y que adonde ellos muriesen, moririan ellas. Estas fueron, Beatriz de Palacios, Maria de Estrada, Juana Martin, Isabel Rodriguez, y la Muger de Alonso Valiente, y otras."—TORQUEMADA, *Monarquía Indiana*, lib. iv. cap. 96.

death, they were taken again into his favour, and employed against the common enemy.

Pertinacity of the Mexicans.

On the other hand, the Mexicans remained as stiff-necked as ever. They had already endured forty-five days of siege: their allies had been conquered; and they themselves were beginning to feel the effects of starvation. But their resolution only rose with their difficulties; and misery lent strength to their resolves. "We found them with more spirit than ever,"* is the expression of Cortes in describing their conduct. He, therefore, though very unwillingly, came to the conclusion that he must destroy their city bit by bit, a necessity which must have been a great vexation to him, for he declares that Mexico was "the most beautiful thing in the world" (*la mas hermosa cosa del Mundo*). This plan of destruction he proposed to execute thoroughly, pulling down the houses of every street as he gained it; making that

Cortes resolves to destroy Mexico.

---

* "E quanto mas de estas cosas les deciamos, menos muestra viamos en ellos de flaqueza: mas antes en el pelear, y en todos sus ardides, los hallabamos con mas ánimo, que nunca."—LORENZANA, p. 279.

which was lofty, level; and that which was water, dry land.*

On the first day of recommencing the attack, he was met and delayed by feigned proposals for peace; but, these coming to nothing, he began to execute his plan of gradual demolition; and, as he had the assistance of one hundred and fifty thousand Indian allies, and as destruction is always a rapid process, he accomplished great things.

The next day he made his way into the Square, and ascended the highest platform of the Temple, because, as he says, he knew it vexed the enemy much to see him there. A stranger sight, one more animating to the Spaniards, more discouraging to the Mexicans, more picturesque in itself, and fraught with more matter for stern reflection, cannot well be imagined. It was no hideous Idol-god of War that had stepped down from its pedestal, but a majestic living man, clad in resplendent armour, who directed the fight below, and fulfilled the prophecies which had been uttered by the priests and necromancers—those safe and

Not Huitzilopochtli, but Cortes, directs the fight from the summit of the temple.

* "Lo que era Agua, hacerlo Tierra-firme."—LORENZANA, p. 279.

22822

easy prophecies of disaster, sure to be fulfilled, at some time or other, in the life of any man, or any people, prophesied against. When night came on, the Spaniards and their allies retired, pursued by the Mexicans, but still, by means of ambuscades, contriving in their retreat to slay many of their enemies. Thus, with little variation, the siege continued for several days, until, by an ambuscade more dexterous than usual, Cortes contrived to cut off five hundred of the bravest and foremost men of the city, whom his cannibal allies devoured.*

Cortes thinks that the result of the ambuscade just recorded was most advantageous for the besiegers, and was the cause of the city being speedily subdued. But, indeed, it is evident that the brief success which the enemy attained, when Cortes, overcome by importunity, made that injudicious attack upon the city, was the expiring effort of the Mexicans. It appears that they were suffering now the extremes of hunger, going

Famine in Mexico.

* "Y aquella noche tubieron bien que cenar nuestros Amigos, porque todos los que se mataron, tomaron, y llevaron hechos piezas para comer."—LORENZANA, p. 283.

out at night to fish in the waters about their houses, and seeking a miserable sustenance in herbs and roots. Upon the wretched people so employed Cortes made an onslaught very early in the morning, and slew eight hundred of them, for the most part women and children.

Meanwhile, the Indian allies of Cortes thickened around the contest, as a flock of birds of rapine over carrion, and darkened the outskirts of the devoted city. They came in such multitudes, that, as he himself says, there was no taking any account of them. The proud Mexico, hitherto unconscious of a conqueror, was penetrated by the Spanish forces on all sides, till at length the market-place was gained by the troops of Alvarado, and free communication was opened and maintained between his camp and that of Cortes. It is curious to note the change in the language now addressed by the Mexicans to the Tlascalans and the other Spanish allies. When the townsmen saw these Indians burning and destroying on all sides, they tauntingly bade them continue doing so, as they would have to build up anew what they were then destroying, if not for them (the Mexicans), at least, for their own friends, the

Free communication between the camps of Alvarado and Cortes.

Spaniards.* Cortes afterwards comments upon this prophecy in a manner that is anything but chivalrous or gentlemanly (indeed, conquerors on their own account seldom are distinguished gentlemen),† for he adds, "In this last respect it pleased God that they turned out to be true prophets, for they, the allies, are those who are commencing to rebuild."‡

Cortes now possessed no less than seven-eighths of the city, as he perceived on looking from a great tower which adjoined the market-place. Still, the enemy did not give way, and, as the powder of Cortes was failing, he caused a catapult to be constructed, and placed on a raised platform, twelve feet in height, which was in the middle of the market-place, whereon the Mexicans had been accustomed to hold their games, and

Cortes constructs a catapult.

---

* "Decian á nuestros Amigos, que no ficiessen sino quemar, y destruir, que ellos se las harian tornar á hacer de nuevo, porque si ellos eran vencedores, ya ellos sabian, que habia de ser assí, y si no, que las habian de hacer para nosotros."—LORENZANA, p. 286.

† Julius Cæsar always excepted.

‡ "Y de esto postrero plugo á Dios, que salieron verdaderos, aunque ellos son los que las tornan á hacer."—LORENZANA, p. 286.

whereon, as I imagine, gladiatorial shows had been performed. But this catapult was not constructed properly, and failed to terrify the enemy. The greater part of them were now, however, only food for an almost unresisted slaughter, which after two or three days interval, was recommenced. The Spaniards found the streets full of women and children, and other helpless persons, dying of hunger. Cortes renewed his proposals for peace. The warriors in Mexico gave only dissembling answers. The conflict was accordingly renewed, and twelve thousand citizens perished on this occasion, for there was no saving their lives from the cruelty of the Indian allies.*

12,000 Mexicans are slain.

The next day the Mexicans, seeing the multitudes that were arrayed against them, and that, to use the graphic language of Cortes, there was no room for them, except upon the dead bodies of their own people, demanded a conference; and, when Cortes arrived at a certain barricade, he

The Mexicans demand a conference.

* "Muertos, y presos pasaron de doce mil Animas, con los quales osaban de tanta crueldad nuestros Amigos, que por ninguna via á ninguno daban la vida, aunque mas reprendidos, y castigados de nosotros eran."—LORENZANA, p. 291.

was met by some of the principal men. Their address to him savoured of a wild despair, but did not look as if they had any authority to treat for peace. They asked why,—since he was a Child of the Sun, and the Sun in so short a time as one day and one night went round the whole world,—did not Cortes as swiftly finish their slaughter, and release them from such suffering; for now they desired to die, and to go to their Huitzilopochtli, who was waiting for them to rejoice with.* Cortes said everything in reply which could induce them to treat for peace; but all his efforts were in vain. He also sent to them one of their principal chiefs, whom he had captured, and who, after listening to the arguments of Cortes, had promised to do his utmost to promote peace. This Chief was received with reverence by the Mexicans, and brought before

* "Que pues ellos me tenían por Hijo del Sol, y el Sol en tanta brevedad como era en un dia, y una noche, daba vuelta á todo el Mundo, que porque yo assí brevemente no los acababa de matar, y los quitaba de penar tanto, porque ya ellos tenian deseos de morir, y irse al Cielo para su Ochilobus, que los estaba esperando para descansar."—LORENZANA, p. 292.

Quauhtemotzin, the King; but, it is said, that when he began to talk of peace, the King immediately ordered him to be slain and sacrificed. It seems that the Mexicans, as often happens in difficult negotiation, had lost the power of taking more than one view of their position. They were in that state of mind in which the variations of thought, and the vacillations of temper are alike prevented by a mental process, which, if it were conscious and intentional, might be aptly illustrated by the practice of those desperate or determined captains who nail their colours to the mast. In fine, they were under the dominion of a "fixed idea," and the only answer which Cortes received to his overtures for peace was a furious attack on the part of the Mexicans, who exclaimed that their only wish was to die. Many of them were slain, and the Spanish captains returned to their camps for that day.

The Mexicans no longer amenable to wise counsel.

Renewal of the attack on the part of the Mexicans.

The next day Cortes made an entry into the city, but did not attempt to penetrate beyond that part of it which he had already gained. On the contrary, approaching a barricade, he addressed some of the Mexican chiefs whom he knew (Cortes seems to have possessed in a high degree the royal

Cortes makes fresh overtures for peace.

accomplishment of remembering faces), and asked them why their King did not come to treat with him about peace? Finally, after some delay, it was agreed that on the next day the King should come to confer with Cortes in the market-place, and Cortes accordingly caused a lofty platform to be prepared for the interview.

Cortes, in vain, seeks a conference with the King of Mexico.

But when the time for the conference arrived, instead of the King, there came five of his principal lords, who made excuses for him, saying that he feared to appear before the Spanish General. Cortes did all that he could to win over these chiefs, giving them food,—by their ravenous way of devouring which, he perceived how pressing was their hunger. He also sent some food as a present for the King. The envoys did not, however, hold out any hope that Quauhtemotzin would attend a conference. Still Cortes persevered in sending assurances by them to the King, that he might come in safety; and so this conference ended.

Early on the ensuing morning the five chiefs repaired to the camp of Cortes, and said that their King had consented to meet him in the market-place; and Cortes, therefore, did not allow his

Indian allies to enter the city. But when he had gone himself to the appointed spot, and had waited several hours, and the King did not make his appearance, Cortes summoned in the allies, and the battle, or rather the slaughter, recommenced. On that day there were slain, or taken prisoners, no fewer than forty thousand Mexicans. So great were the cries and lamentations of the women and children, that there was no person (Cortes means no Spanish person) whose heart it did not break to hear them.* But the Spaniards could not prevent the slaughter, for they were only about nine hundred, and the allies more than one hundred and fifty thousand in number.

The slaughter renewed.

The final day of Mexico had come. The besieged retained now only a small corner of their city. Their King, instead of occupying one of those spacious palaces, in comparison with which the royal dwellings of the Old World were poor and mean, was obliged to take refuge in a boat. The order of the day, on the part of the Spaniards,

The last day of the siege.

* "Y era tanta la grita, y lloro de los Niños, y Mugeres, que no habia Persona, á quien no quebrantasse el corazon."—LORENZANA, p. 296.

was as follows: Sandoval was to force his way with the brigantines into a deep part of the lake at the rear of those houses which were still held by the Mexicans.* Alvarado was to enter the market-place, but was not to commence his attack until Cortes should order him to do so by a signal agreed upon,—namely, the firing of a musket. Cortes himself was to bring up three heavy cannon, in order to be able to inflict severe loss upon the Mexicans without coming to close combat with them; for, with their vast numbers, they might suffocate the Spaniards, if the ranks were once intermingled.

All these arrangements having been made, and the approaches commenced, Cortes ascended to a terraced roof; and, from that height, addressed some of the principal men of the city, whom he knew, asking them why their King would not come, and suggesting, that as they were in such extremities that resistance was impossible, they

Cortes counsels the Mexicans to yield.

* According to Clavigero, this was a sort of harbour entirely surrounded with houses, where the vessels of the merchants used to land their goods when they came to the market of Tlaltelulco. See CLAVIGERO, *Storia Antica del Messico*, tom. III. lib. x. pp. 227-8.

should take such measures as would prevent all of them losing their lives. They should, therefore, summon their Prince to his presence, and have no fear. Two of them departed with this message, and shortly afterwards returned with the principal person in the city next after the King, who was called the *Cihuacuatl.* He informed Cortes that the King would by no means appear before him, preferring death: that he himself was sorry for this determination; but that Cortes must do what seemed good to him. Cortes replied that the Cihuacuatl might return to his men, and that he and they would do well to prepare themselves for battle. Meanwhile, an immense number of men, women, and children made their way out towards the Spaniards, hurrying in such a manner that they cast themselves into the water, and were suffocated amidst the multitude of dead bodies that already lay there.

The dead in Mexico.

The dead bodies were so numerous, that they were found afterwards lying in heaps in the streets; for thus the Mexicans had concealed their losses, not liking to throw the bodies into the water for fear of their being found by the brigantines. The number of those who died from the effects of hun-

ger, pestilence, and drinking salt water, amounted to more than fifty thousand. Ffty thousand souls! In studying wars, we acquire an almost flippant familiarity with great loss of life, and hardly recognize what it is. We have to think what a beautiful creature any man or woman is, for at least one period of his or her life, in the eyes of some other being; what a universe of hope is often contained in one unnoticed life; and that the meanest human being would be a large subject of study for the rest of mankind. We need, I say, to return to such homely considerations as the above, before we can fairly estimate the sufferings and loss to mankind which these little easy sentences,—"There perished ten thousand of the allies on this day," "By that ambuscade we cut off nineteen hundred of the enemy," "In this retreat, which was well executed, they did not lose more than five thousand men,"—give indication of. It was in vain that Cortes tried to prevent the slaughter of the miserable people, who now made their way out, by posting Spaniards in the streets through which they had to pass. His Indian allies slew fifteen thousand of them on that day.

Reading of wars we become accustomed to think little of slaughter.

Still the chiefs and warriors, hunger-stricken, encompassed, and overlooked* as they were, maintained their position upon some terraces and houses, and also in boats upon the water. Cortes ordered the cannon to be discharged; but neither did this induce them to lay down their arms. It was now evening, and the Spanish General commanded the musket to be fired, which was the signal for the general attack. The Mexican position was immediately forced, and its defenders driven into the water, where some of them surrendered. At the same moment the brigantines entered the harbour, ploughing through the fleet of Mexican canoes, which were instantly scattered in flight. A brigantine, commanded by a man named Garcia Holguin, pursued a particular canoe in which there appeared to be people of condition (*gente de manera*). His cross-bowmen in the prow were taking aim at those in the canoe, when a signal was made from it that the King was

The desperation of the besieged.

The last attack.

* "Ni les aprovechaba disimulacion, ni otra cosa, porque no viessemos su perdicion, y su flaqueza muy á la clara."—LORENZANA, p. 299.

Capture of the King of Mexico.

there. The canoe was immediately captured, and the unfortunate Quauhtemotzin, together with the King of Tlacuba, was found in it; and both Kings were taken at once to Cortes. Cortes received the King of Mexico with courtesy. Quauhtemotzin advanced to him and said, "I have done all that on my part I was obliged to do, to defend myself and my people, until I came into this state; now you may do with me that which you please;" and so saying, he put his hand upon a poignard which Cortes wore, requesting that he would kill him with it. But Cortes spoke kindly to him, and bade him have no fear. The King being captured, all opposition ceased, and what remained of Mexico was taken.

This day, memorable in the annals of American history, was a Tuesday, the day of St. Hippolytus, the 13th of August, 1521. The siege, according to the computation of Cortes, who reckons that it began on the 30th of May, had lasted seventy-five days. We cannot give a

Duration of the siege.

better description of its fearful results than in the simple words of an eye-witness, who says, "It is true, and I swear 'Amen,' that all the lake and the houses and the barbacans were full of the

bodies and heads of dead men,* so that I do not know how I may describe it. For, in the streets, and in the very courts of Tlaltelulco, there were no other things, and we could not walk except amongst the bodies and heads of dead Indians. I have read of the destruction of Jerusalem; but whether there was such a mortality in that I do not know." †

Thus fell the great city of Mexico. The nature of the conquest, the disposition of the conqueror, the extent of territory conquered, above all, the alliances by which the conquest was effected, all combined to produce a very different state of things from that under which

* It is worthy of note that the Mexicans did not, even under the pressure of famine, devour their own people; they were, therefore, cannibals only when victory furnished them with the savoury morsel of a dead enemy.

† "Es verdad, y juro amen, que toda la laguna y casas, y barbacoas estavan llenas de cuerpos y carbeças de hombres muertos, que yo no sé de que manera lo escriva. Pues en las calles, y en los mismos patios del Tatelulco, no avia otras cosas, y no podiamos andar sino entre cuerpos y cabeças de Indios muertos. Yo he leido la destruicion de Jerusalem; mas si en ella huvo tanta mortandad como esta yo no lo sé."—BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 156.

the West India Islands were conquered and depopulated. Again, the Conquest of Mexico occurring at a period when the Home Government had acquired a little more insight into the management of colonies, also tended to make the fate of the nations now conquered very different from that of the islanders. The great extent and riches of New Spain enforced the attention of the Spanish government to that country, as its chief colony; and its conqueror, Cortes, became at once the principal figure in the New World. After this conquest, even the greater islands, such as Hispaniola and Cuba, lately the centres of government, were chiefly interesting as affording ample proof, on a small scale, of the immense misgovernment which they had undergone.

Nature and result of the conquest.

By that inevitable fortune which attaches itself to remarkable sites, Mexico, which had been the queen of cities in the Aztec period of dominion, will now, under the auspices of Cortes, when it has become Spanish Mexico, and when a beautiful cathedral has been placed upon the exact spot where stood the accursed temple of the god of war—when the exquisite gardens of Mon-

tezuma have given way to formal *alamedas*— when the vast expanse of waters shall, by the application of cunning art, have been withdrawn, leaving wide, dreary, arid spaces of waste land, —continue to be a ruling, queenlike city, and will still demand a large attention from the civilized world.

Mexico still a queen amongst cities.

CHAPTER XIII.

State of Mexico after the Conquest—Thanksgiving for the Victory—Mexico rebuilt and repeopled—Christoval de Tapia sent to supersede Cortes—Revolt of Panuco—Cortes inhabits Mexico—Memorial of Conquistadores to the Emperor—Arrival of Franciscans.

Mexico not habitable.

NOTHING can well convey a surer indication of the sad state of Mexico, on the day of its conquest, than the fact that both the victors and the vanquished began to leave the city. Cortes and his soldiers returned to their camp, while, for three days and nights, the causeways were crowded by the departing Mexicans—yellow, flaccid, filthy, miserable beings, "whom it was grief to behold."* When the city

* "Digo que en tres dias con sus noches iban todas tres calçadas llenas de Indios é Indias, y muchachos llenos de bote en bote, que nunca dexavan de salir, y tan

was deserted, Cortes sent persons in to view it. They found the houses full of dead bodies. The few wretched creatures who still here and there appeared, were those who, from extreme poverty, sickness, or indifference to life, were unwilling or unable to crawl out. In a great town there are always some abject persons to whom long despair and utter hardness of life make any lair seem welcome. The surface of the ground had been ploughed up, in order to get at the roots of the herbage. The bark of the trees had been eaten off; and not a drop of fresh water was to be found.

State of the city. Aug. 1521.

Mexico was taken on the 13th of August, 1521. For three days afterwards Cortes remained in his camp, and he then proceeded to the neighbouring city of Cuyoacan. His first care for the city of Mexico was to give orders that the aqueduct should be repaired. His first act on behalf of his own troops was to offer a thanksgiving for the victory. After the thanksgiving, Cortes held a great banquet in Cuyoacan. At this feast, which

The aqueduct to be repaired.

Thanksgiving for the victory.

---

flacos, y suzios, é amarillos, é hediondos, que era lástima de los ver."—BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 156.

was followed by a dance, the soldiers, naturally excited by their long abstinence from anything like amusement, indulged in such freaks and excesses that Father Olmedo was greatly scandalized. Cortes being informed of this by Sandoval, suggested to the good monk that he should appoint a solemn procession, after which mass should be celebrated, and the Father might give the army a sermon, telling them "that they should not despoil the Indians of their goods or their daughters, nor quarrel amongst themselves, but conduct themselves like Catholic Christians, that so God might continue to favour them." This was accordingly done with all fitting solemnity.

A procession and a sermon.

The next thing was to dismiss the Indian allies, who were favoured with many gracious words and promises; and were enriched with cotton, gold, and various spoil—amongst which were portions of the bodies of their enemies salted.* They then departed joyfully to their own country.

The allies are dismissed.

The allies being dismissed, the Mexicans were

* "Y aun llevaron hartas cargas de tasajos cecinados de Indios Mexicanos, que repartieron entre sus parientes y amigos, y como cosas de sus enemigos la comieron por fiestas."—Bernal Diaz, cap. 156.

ordered to make clean the streets of Mexico, and to return to the city in two months' time. A quarter of the town was appointed for their particular habitation, divided from that of the Spaniards by one of the great water-streets.

The Mexicans allowed to return to their city.

The next question concerned the spoil of Mexico. The conquerors were entirely disappointed by the smallness of the booty. Murmurs arose amongst the soldiery, and the meaner spirits began to suspect that their General concealed the spoil for his own benefit. Cortes, with a weakness that was unusual in him, consented, at the instance of the King's Treasurer, that Quauhtemotzin and his cousin, the King of Tlacuba, should be submitted to the torture, in order that they might be induced to discover where they had hid their treasures. During the cruel process, the King of Tlacuba, suffering agonies from the torture, looked beseechingly to his lord paramount to give him licence to tell what he knew, whereupon the gallant young King, himself in torment, treated his fellow sufferer with contempt, uttering these remarkable words—"Am I in any delight, or bath?" (*Estoi yo en algun deleite, ó baño?*) It appears, however, that one or other of the Kings

Smallness of the booty.

The Kings of Mexico and Tlacuba exposed to the torture.

confessed, that ten days before the capture of the city, the King of Mexico had ordered the pieces of artillery which he had taken from the Spaniards to be thrown into the lake, together with whatever gold, silver, precious stones, and jewels remained to him. It is remarkable that Cortes makes no mention of this torture of the captive Kings in his letter to the Emperor. Afterwards, when the transaction was made a matter of formal accusation against him, he defended himself by declaring that "he had done it at the request of Julian de Alderete, the King's Treasurer, and in order that the truth might appear, for all men said that he (Cortes) possessed the whole of the riches of Montezuma, and that the reason why he did not like to have Quauhtemotzin tortured, was for fear the fact should come out against himself of having kept back the spoil."*

The excuse of Cortes.

It may not be out of place to remind the reader what kind of man Cortes was at the time of the conquest of Mexico. One who knew him well,

---

* Gomara, *Crónica de la Nueva-España*, cap. 145. Barcia, *Historiadores*, tom. ii.

and whose descriptions of men are often as minute as if he was noting animals for sale, thus depicts Cortes. He was of good make and stature; well-proportioned and stalwart. The colour of his face inclined to pallor,* and his countenance was not very joyful. If his face had been longer, it would have been handsomer. His eyes, when he looked at you, had an amiable expression, otherwise, a haughty one. His beard was somewhat dark and thin, and so was his hair, which at that time was worn long. His chest was deep, and his shoulders finely formed. He was slender, with very little stomach; somewhat bow-legged, with well-turned thighs and ankles. He was a good horseman, and dexterous in the use of all arms, as well on foot as on horseback; and, above all, he had heart and soul, which are what is most to the purpose." †

Personal appearance of Cortes.

---

* *Lit.* "ash-coloured,"—the *cinereus color* of the Romans.

† "Fue de buena estatura y cuerpo, y bien proporcionado, y membrudo, y la color de la cara tirava algo a cenicienta, é no mui alegre: y si tuviera el rostro mas largo, mejor le pareciera; los ojos en el mirar amorosos, y por otra graves: las barbas tenia algo prietas, y pocas y ralas, y el cabello que en aquel tiempo se usava, era de la misma manera que las barbas, y tenia el pecho alto,

Patience of Cortes.

The same author dwells on the wonderful patience of Cortes. When very angry, there was a vein which swelled in his forehead, and another in his throat; but, however enraged, his words were always mild and decorous. He might indulge with his friends in such an expression as "Plague upon you" (*mal pese á vos*); but to the common soldiers, even when they said the rudest things to him, he merely replied, "Be silent, or go in God's name, and from henceforward have more care in what you say, or it will cost you dear, and I shall have to chastise you."

It appears that, in extreme cases of anger, he had a curious habit of throwing off his cloak; but even then he always kept himself from coarse and violent language*—a wise practice—for a furious gesture is readily forgiven (it is a mere

---

y la espalda de buena manera, y era cenceño, y de poca barriga, y algo estevado, y las piernas y muslos bien sacados, y era buen ginete, y diestro de todas armas, ansí á pié, como á cavallo, y sabia mui bien mencarlas, y sobre todo coraçon, y ánimo, que es lo que haze al caso."—BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 203.

* "Y aun algunas vezes de mui enojado, arrojava una manta, y no dezia palabra fea, ni injuriosa á ningun Capitan, ni soldado."—BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 203.

sign of the passion of the speaker); not so a single hasty word, which may kindle all the fires of vanity in the person spoken to.

In his mode of argument the same composure was visible, and he was a master in the arts of persuasive rhetoric.

His mode of dress.

He was remarkably clean in his person and neat in his dress,* not delighting much in fine silks or velvets, or gorgeous ornaments. One chain only, of exquisite workmanship, he wore, with a medallion having an image of the Virgin on one side of it, and of St. John the Baptist on the other; he also wore a magnificent diamond ring.

His diet was of a simple kind; but, like most great men who work hard mentally, he was not a small eater.

He was very fond of games of chance, but good or ill-fortune in them never disturbed his equanimity, though it gave him opportunity for witty sayings.†

---

* "Era Hombre limpísimo."—GOMARA, *Crónica de la Nueva-España*, cap. 238. BARCIA, *Historiadores*, tom. ii.

† "Era mui aficionado á juegos de naipes é dados y quando jugava era mui afable en el juego, y dezia ciertos

He was very firm in his resolves. To those who have read the story of his life up to this time, it is scarcely necessary to mention this fact. But as no human virtue is without its corresponding drawback, it appears probable, from some words his chaplain lets fall, that Cortes occasionally carried his military resolve into civil life, and stood more upon his rights in legal matters than was always wise or prudent. He was not what may be called a profuse man, and was occasionally

His pertinacity.

---

remoquetes, que suelen dezir los que juegan á los dados."—BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 203.

It is curious to note the same trait, of a fondness for games of chance, in Augustus Cæsar.—"It was considered a defiance of public opinion in Augustus to avow, almost without scruple, that he was accustomed to amuse himself in his family, or among his nearest associates, with games of chance for the most trifling ventures. He played, says Suetonius, openly and without disguise, even in his old age; nor did he confine himself to the genial month of December, but amused himself in this way any day of the year, whether of business or holiday. Familiar letters have been preserved, in which he recounts to Tiberius his bloodless contests at the supper table with Vinicius and Silius; how they had played, for pastime, not for gain, sporting a single denarius upon each die, and sweeping the modest

even parsimonious, though immensely liberal as a lover or a friend, or when he thought to carry a purpose in war, or when he wished to gratify any particular fancy.*

His present grandeur of estate sat upon him with the easiness of a well-fitting robe that had long been worn, and he presented in no respect the appearance of a new-made man. He seemed rather to have come to some high fortune which had been awaiting him from his birth. Any one,

His dignified demeanour.

---

stakes with the lucky throw of the Venus. 'We played every day through the five-day feast of Minerva, and kept the table warm. Your brother was most vociferous. Yet he lost but little after all. . . . . I lost for my part twenty pieces: but then I was generous, as usual, for had I insisted on all my winnings, or retained all I gave away, I should have gained fifty. But I like to be liberal, and I expect immortal honour for it.' To Julia he wrote: 'I make you a present of 250 denarii, the sum I gave to each of my guests to play at dice with at supper, or, if they pleased, at odd and even.'"—MERIVALE'S *History of the Romans under the Empire*, vol. iv., chap. 37, p. 294.

* "Gastaba liberalísimamente en la Guerra, en Mugeres, por Amigos, í en antojos, mostrando escaseça en algunas cosas, por donde le llaman Rio de Avenida."—GOMARA, *Crónica de la Nueva-España*, cap. 238. BARCIA, *Historiadores*, tom. ii.

however, who has seen the singular dignity and grace of bearing which a Spanish peasant of the present day will manifest, can easily imagine that a descendant of a good family, with Pizarros and Altamiranos for immediate ancestors, would be very little disconcerted at being suddenly called to sit in the seat of judgment, to dispense rewards amongst obedient followers, and to sway an obsequious people, accustomed to be ruled by monarchs of a like imperious dignity and composure.*

Cortes as a man of business.

It is probable that Cortes, partially at least, fulfilled the requisites of that character, one of the rarest to be met with, and very much wanted at that time in the Indies—an admirable man of business. Rare, almost, as great poets,—rarer, perhaps, than veritable saints and martyrs,—are consummate men of business. A man, to be excellent in this way, must not only be variously gifted, but his gifts should be nicely proportioned to one another. He must have in a high degree

* For the descent of Cortes from illustrious ancestors, see PIZARRO Y ORELLANA, *Varones Ilustres de Nuevo Mundo; Cortes*, cap. I. FR^co^. DIEGO DE SAYAS, *Anales de Aragon*, cap. I; and *Doc. Ined.*, tom. iv. p. 238.

that virtue which men have always found the least pleasant of virtues,—prudence. His prudence, however, will not be merely of a cautious and quiescent order, but that which, being ever actively engaged, is more fitly called discretion than prudence. Such a man must have an almost ignominious love of details, blended (and this is a rare combination) with a high power of imagination, enabling him to look along extended lines of possible action, and put these details in their right places. He requires a great knowledge of character, with that exquisite tact which feels unerringly the right moment when to act. A discreet rapidity must pervade all the movements of his thought and action. He must be singularly free from vanity, and is generally found to be an enthusiast, who has the art to conceal his enthusiasm.

Comparison of Cortes with other great men.

Cardinal Ximenes, King Ferdinand, Vasco Nuñez and Cortes are the four men who, in the history of the Indies, manifested the greatest powers of business. Las Casas, also, was a very able man, possessing many of the highest faculties for the conduct of affairs. But Cortes probably outshone the rest; and had the Indies been

his appanage, instead of a country unrighteously conquered by him, the administration of the Conquest would have been brought to the highest perfection that it could have reached at that period.

Amidst the infinite variety of human beings, not merely can no one man be found exactly like another, but no character can be superimposed upon another without large differences being at once discernible. Still there is often a vein of similarity amongst remarkable men which enables us to classify them as belonging to the same order. Cortes, for instance, was of the same order as Charles the Fifth and Augustus Cæsar. As a warrior he resembled Julius Cæsar; but as a statesman, I am not, I think, far wrong in likening him to Augustus, and to Charles the Fifth. Each of them had supreme self-possession: the bitterest misfortune never left them abject: the highest success found them composed to receive it. Each of them, though grave and dignified, was remarkable for affability with all kinds of men. All three were eminently tenacious of their resolves, but, at the same time, singularly amenable to reason—which is, perhaps, the first quality

in a ruler. Charles the Fifth was much the least cruel; but the cruelty of the others was never wanton, never capricious, never divorced from policy. All three had long memories, both of benefits and injuries. They were firm friends, and good masters to their subordinates, but could not be accused of favouritism. Cortes had, perhaps, more poetry in him than was to be found in either of the others. He had the warlike element which is discernible in Charles the Fifth, but was certainly a greater commander, and possessed more readiness and flexibility. Finally, Augustus Cæsar, Cortes, and Charles the Fifth were of that rare order of men in whom there is perpetual growth of character,—who go on learning,—to whom every blunder they commit is a fruitful lesson,—with whom there is less that is accidental than is to be observed in the rest of mankind,—and of whom humanity, with much to regret, cannot fail to be proud.

Cortes resembled Augustus Cæsar and Charles the Fifth.

The characters of great men may be more amply summed up, and more justly appreciated, at the close of their careers; but it seems well, occasionally, to look at them with all the light we can get, in the midst of their labours, and to

endeavour to see them in the guise in which they stood when they were face to face with other great men, and immersed in the contests of life.

Such as he has been described above was Cortes at the vigorous age of thirty-five, in the height of his unrivalled career, after one of the most memorable conquests made known to us in history.

Dealings of Cortes with other States in New Spain.

As was to be expected, ambassadors arrived at the Spanish Camp from neighbouring territories; and Cortes was enabled to give them a most significant illustration of his prowess, by taking them to behold the ruins of Mexico.* Their mode of describing events was pictorial; and here was a scene which, if well portrayed, needed little comment by words or hieroglyphics.

Occupation of Mexico by the Spaniards.

Cortes now prepared for the occupation of the site of Mexico by his own men, giving the usual quantities of land (*solares*) to those who wished to become residents. He then appointed the

* "Hícelos llevar á ver la destruccion y asolamiento de la Ciudad de Temixtitan, que de la ver, y de ver su fuerza, y fortaleza, por estar en el Agua, quedaron muy mas espantados."—LORENZANA, p. 308.

principal officers, the *Alcaldes* and *Regidores*. The building of the town was carried on with such rapidity, that in five months after its commencement, the new Mexico already gave promise of becoming, as the old had been, the principal and ruling city of those provinces. It is a remarkable fact that the Tezcucans were largely employed in this rebuilding, thus fulfilling, at least partially, a prophecy made by the Mexicans in the height of the war. The labour was great, food was very scarce, and numbers of the workmen died from the effects of famine. It is worthy of note that they brought the materials for building on their shoulders, or dragged them along by sheer force, and their only comfort during these great exertions seems to have been in working to the sound of music.*

Tezcucans employed.

Cortes did not accomplish all these great works

---

* "El trabajo fué grande; cá traian acuestas, ó arrastrando, la Piedra, la Tierra, la Madera, Cal, Ladrillos, í todos los otros materiales. Pero era mucho de ver los Cantares, í Musica que tenian. El apellidar su Pueblo, í Señor, í el motejarse unos á otros."—GOMARA, *Crónica de la Nueva España*, cap. 162. BARCIA, *Historiadores*, tom. ii.

without the envy that belongs to such men and such deeds. The white walls of the palace of Cuyoacan were blackened each morning by malicious pasquinades in poetry and prose. Some said that the sun, and the moon, and the stars, and the sea, had their courses, and if sometimes they went out of these courses, they nevertheless returned to their original state, and that so it would have to be with the ambition of Cortes. Others said that the soldiers should not call themselves the *Conquistadores* of New Spain, but the conquered of Cortes (*conquistados de Hernando Cortés*). Some said that he had taken his fifth as General, and a second as King; and others again that Velasquez had incurred all the expense, and Cortes reaped all the profit. Others wrote—

Pasquinades against Cortes.

> "Alas! how sad a soul I bear,
> Until I see what is my share."*

Cortes, who could use his pen as well as his sword, was not backward in replying to his ma-

---

* "O que triste está el alma mia,
Hasta que la parte vea."
BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 157.

ligners; and he wittily wrote up "A white wall, the paper of fools" (*Pared blanca, papel de necios*). Next morning was found added, "and for truths." Finally, however, the practice of scribbling these things on the walls rose to such a height, that Cortes was obliged to exercise his authority in forbidding it altogether.

Another disagreeable episode in the affairs of Cortes was the arrival of an obscure man, named Christoval de Tapia, as Governor of New Spain. This appointment was the work of Fonseca, the Bishop of Burgos, who, whether he thwarted Las Casas, or, with much less injustice, condemned the proceedings of Cortes, was always in the wrong. Cortes himself made some show of obeying Tapia, but the friends of Cortes would not listen to this man's taking upon him so important a charge, and he was obliged to quit New Spain. This transaction is worth mentioning only as showing amidst what interruptions and vexations Cortes worked out his great achievements. It was not until three years and four months after Cortes had been elected Captain-General by his followers, in the council held at Vera Cruz, that he was appointed by the Court of Spain, Governor and

Arrival of Tapia to supersede Cortes. 1522.

Cortes appointed Governor

and Captain-General, Oct. 15, 1522.

Captain-General of New Spain, in a despatch dated at Valladolid the 15th of October, 1522.

A further trouble to the administration of Cortes, which also is worth mentioning only as showing the nature of the difficulties he had to contend with, was the revolt of Panuco, a province to the north-east of Mexico. Cortes went to Panuco himself, and succeeded, after several encounters with the Indians, in subduing them and pacificating the province.

Revolt of Panuco. 1522.

Soon after his return from this expedition Cortes despatched messengers to Spain to urge his own claims and those of the *Conquistadores;* who also on their own account sent a memorial to the Emperor.

Messengers sent by Cortes and his men to the Emperor, Dec. 20, 1522.

These messengers did not go empty-handed. They were commissioned to take to the Emperor eighty-eight thousand *pesos*, in gold bars, and the wardrobe of the late monarch of Mexico, Montezuma, which was rich with jewels, amongst them some pearls as large as hazel-nuts. These treasures never reached the Court of Spain, for they were captured by a French corsair, named Jean Florin. They probably, however, did as much good to the Emperor as if they had been spent

upon his armies, for they served to give the King of France some intimation of the wealth which the King of Spain was likely to draw from the Indies. The despatches had been intrusted to a man of the name of Alonso de Avila, who, though taken prisoner, contrived to have these valuable documents conveyed to some friends of Cortes in Spain, whence they were forwarded to his Majesty the Emperor, in Flanders. The exact time of Alonso de Avila's departure from Vera Cruz was the 20th of December, 1522.

Memorial of the *Conquistadores.*

The petition from the *Conquistadores* gave an account of the siege of Mexico; besought his Majesty to send to New Spain a bishop, and monks of all the religious Orders; explained their own conduct in not receiving Tapia; prayed that the government of New Spain might be conferred upon Cortes (the news of his appointment as Governor had not yet reached them); and asked, on their own account, that all the royal offices in the new colony might be given to them.

The above, however, are not the points in the memorial which are most curious, and which most require to be dwelt upon.

The world is so torn by differences of opinion,

that it is always very interesting, and somewhat delightful, to find any one subject upon which there is singular unanimity. Now there was something wherein the Spanish conquerors and colonists universally agreed. Biscayan, Estremaduran, Andalucian, Castillian—men who had various points of difference, and numberless provincial jealousies,—concurred in one request. As soon as any colony was in the least degree established in the New World, the colonists, almost in their first communication with their sovereign, were sure to entreat him to prohibit lawyers from coming out to them. The following brief notices will serve to indicate this remarkable unanimity.

One thing upon which the Spanish colonists agreed.

Cuba.

In 1516 the commissioners from Cuba to the Court succeeded in obtaining an order that lawyers should not be allowed to go there, because, since some had gone thither, lawsuits had arisen amongst the inhabitants.*

---

* "Cuios Procuradores Antonio Velazquez, í Panfilo de Narvaez, haviendo pedido muchas cosas, al cabo alcançaron, que porque de haver pasado Letrados á Cuba, havian nacido Pleitos entre los Vecinos, que no pasasen mas, í que los que en ella estaban no abogasen."—HERRERA, *Hist. de las Indias*, dec. II. lib. ii. cap. 8.

The words of Vasco Nuñez from the Terra-firma, in 1513, are so remarkable, that they must be repeated here. "One thing I supplicate your Highness, for it is much to your service, and that is, that you would give orders, under a great penalty, that no bachelor of law, or of anything else, except medicine, should be allowed to come to these parts of the Terra-firma, for no bachelor comes here who is not a devil, and who does not lead the life of a devil; and not only are they bad themselves, but they also make and contrive a thousand lawsuits and iniquities. This regulation would be greatly for your Highness's service, for the land is new."*

The Terra-firma.

Vasco Nunez to King Ferdinand, Jan. 20, 1513.

The prejudice against lawyers was probably communicated by the early Spanish conquerors to the inhabitants of the conquered nations. In a memorable rebellion that took place in the Island of Hispaniola, which began in the year 1519, and was not finally quelled until the year 1533, predatory bands of fugitive Indians roamed about the island and harassed the Spaniards, who, from warriors, had become peaceful colonists and indus-

Hispaniola.

* NAVARRETE, *Col.*, t. iii. p. 374.

trious growers of sugar. On one occasion, a young Spaniard, who had been captured by some of these revolters, and had been sentenced by them to lose his right hand, besought his captors to cut off the left hand instead, whereupon the Indian in charge of the execution replied with these convincing words:—"You are a lawyer. Be thankful that they do not slay you, and have patience." This anecdote was related by the sufferer himself to the historian Oviedo.*

Peru. In the agreement made by the Emperor with Pizarro, in 1529, respecting the discovery of Peru, it was determined that there should not be any lawyers in that country.†

Rio de la Plata. In 1541 the agreement made between the Emperor and Cabeça de Vaca contained a stipulation that there should be no lawyers or proctors in the province of La Plata, for experience had shown that, in lands newly-peopled,

---

* "Yo le vi sin la mano . . . . él le rogò que no le cortassen la mano derecha, sino la ezquierda; é el Tamayo le dixo assí: 'Bachiller soys: agradesçed que no os matan é aved paçiençia.'"—OVIEDO, *Hist. Gen. y Nat. de Indias*, lib. v. cap. 4.

† HERRERA, *Hist. de las Indias*, dec. IV. lib. vi. cap. 5.

many quarrels and lawsuits were promoted by them.*

And now, in this memorial to the Emperor, from Cortes and the other *Conquistadores* of Mexico, Bernal Diaz states—"We supplicated him that he should not send lawyers, for in entering the country they would throw it into confusion with their books; and there would be lawsuits and dissensions."† Mexico.

The King granted their request; and, in the regulations which he made for the colony in 1523, he declared that, "in order that they (the colonists) might perpetuate themselves and live in peace," no lawyers should be allowed to go to New Spain, or, if any should go, that they should not be allowed to advocate causes.‡

---

* "Que no huviese Letrados, ni Procuradores, porque la experiencia havia mostrado, que en las Tierras nuevamente pobladas se seguian muchas diferencias, í Pleitos, por su causa."—HERRERA, *Hist. de las Indias*, dec. VII. lib. ii. cap. 8.

† "Le suplicámos que no embiasse Letrados, porque en entrando en la tierra, la pondrian en rebuelta con sus libros, é auria Pleitos, y dissensiones."—BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 169.

‡ "Para se perpetuar, í vivir en paz, se mandó, que

In 1527 the matter was reconsidered, and lawyers were allowed to go to New Spain, "as the affairs of that country were now of such magnitude that they (the lawyers) could not be dispensed with."

Difficulties about permitting lawyers to go to New Spain.

In the following year, however, it appears that the colonists in New Spain again petitioned against the entry of lawyers, alleging the mischiefs they had caused. On the other hand, it was argued, there were people who could not defend their own causes. Finally, the Court of Spain empowered the authorities in Mexico to act as they might think best in the matter, adding this remarkable proviso,—that the advocates were to swear that if their clients had not the right on their side, they would not help them.*

In 1532, notice was taken of the fact that "by

---

no se consintiese, ni diese lugar, que huviese Procuradores, ni Letrados, que abogasen; í si algunos fuesen á ella, no les permitiese abogar.—HERRERA, *Hist. de las Indias*, dec. III. lib. v. cap. 2.

* "Con tanto, que luego que començasen á abogar, í entender en los negocios, jurasen, que si sus Partes no tenian justicia, no les acudirian, ni pedirian términos, á fin de dilatar."—HERRERA, *Hist. de las Indias*, dec. IV. lib. iii. cap. 9.

the malice of men, and the introduction of so many lawyers and scriveners," the laudable custom of deciding suits by arbitration had fallen into desuetude; and the Spanish Government sought to bring back the state of things to that of the good old times.*

Settlement of suits by arbitration encouraged.

I have little doubt that lawyers and lawsuits flourished in New Spain, notwithstanding this last effort of the Court to restrain them. But the protest uniformly made by the colonists in every infant colony, and not merely made once, but persisted in, is a circumstance which the statesman will not pass by without heed. It would almost seem as if each colonist had undergone some dread experience of law, and felt as if that which might be borne in an old country, where

---

* Por la malicia de los Hombres, é introducion de tantos Letrados, í Escrivanos, se havia perdido esta buena, í loable costumbre; í no solo se havian dado á pleitear, pero si como antes algunos Pleitos se comprometian en Jueces Arbitros, iá no querian, como solian, pasar por las sentencias de ellos; por lo qual se mandó, *que se executasen todas las arbitrarias, dadas conforme á la Lei de Madrid, que establecieron los Reies Católicos en Año de mil quatrocientos í quarenta í nueve.*"—HERRERA, *Hist. de las Indias*, dec. v. lib. ii. cap. 8.

Much law cannot be borne where the rest of life is very difficult.

other things have been worn into some forms of convenience, could not be endured when the rest of life was also severe and complicated. It was too much for a man who had to fight against new diseases, noxious animals, a trying climate, and surrounding barbarians, to be also molested by the cruel frivolities, the fatal forms, the needless precautions which soon become snares, the subtlety applied to verbiage which no skill can securely arrange and no dialectics can disentangle, and all the vast delay which belong to great lawsuits in highly-civilized communities. These things can only be borne when the rest of life is very smooth.

Prices fixed by law. Coinage adulterated.

The infant colony, though not as yet much disturbed by lawyers, was vexed by the difficulties which naturally beset such arduous undertakings as the settlement of men in new lands. The cost of everything was so extravagant that Cortes was obliged to appoint two persons to make a tariff of prices. The coinage, also, was tampered with,* which tampering, as was natural, only led to con-

* See "Bernal Diaz," cap. 157.

fusion, and did no good to those who had tried this worst resource of despots. Of all the new things that probably were introduced into Mexico at that time, water-mills were of the greatest advantage, especially to the Indian women.*

Amidst all his other occupations, Cortes did not forget his duty as a general, nor did he allow his Spaniards to enter the city of Mexico until he had built a citadel which commanded the city and secured the obedience of the native Mexicans.

Fortress built at Mexico.

That done, he entered Mexico. The state of the city at this early period cannot better be described than in the words of Cortes himself. "Because I always desired that this city should

Cortes to the Emperor on the repeopling of Mexico.

* "No apartemos al trigo del molino de agua. Quando se edificó el primero en México, hizieron los Españoles grandes fiestas; y los Indios á su semejança; y con mayor demonstracion las Indias; porque daban principio á su descanso.

En esta ocasion fué quando dixo un Indio anciano, burlando de la invencion: Que hazia holgazanes á los hombres, í muy iguales; pues no se sabia quien era Señor, ó criado. Y añadia: que los ignorantes nacieron para servir, y los sabios para mandar, y holgar."—GIL GONZALEZ DAVILA, *Teatro Eclesiástico de la Primitiva Iglesia de las Indias Occidentales*, tom. i. p. 8. Madrid, 1649.

be rebuilt, on account of its grandeur and marvellous situation (*maravilloso assiento*), I laboured to bring back all the inhabitants, who, since the war, were scattered in many places. And, although I have always kept, and still keep, the King of the city a prisoner, I made a captain-general of his—whom I had captured during the war, and whom I knew from the time of Montezuma—take charge of the repeopling. And, in order that he might have more authority, I conferred upon him the same office which he had held in the time of his Lord, namely, that of *Cihuacuatl*, which means Lieutenant of the King. And to other principal persons,* whom I had also known before, I gave such other offices of government in the city as they had been accustomed to hold.

Re-appoints the *Cihuacuatl*.

* The respectful manner in which Cortes speaks of these Mexican officers is worthy of note. The only sure method of appreciating the merits of a conquered race is to observe the impression made by them on those who saw them first, and who were in a state of civilization not far distant from our own. The inhabitants of America, at the time of their conquest, are best understood by studying the writings of Las Casas, Columbus, Cortes, and Bernal Diaz, all of whom coincide in manifesting a great respect for the conquered races.

And to this *Cihuacuatl*, and to the rest, I gave lordships of lands, and of people, so that they might be maintained, though not to the same extent as heretofore, for fear of their rebellion; and I have always endeavoured to honour and favour them. They have worked in such a manner that there are already thirty thousand inhabitants in the city, and the same order that there used to be in their market-places and barterings. And I have given them such liberties and exemptions that every day the population is increasing; for they live much at their ease, and the workmen in the mechanical arts, of whom there are many, live by the daily wages which they gain amongst the Spaniards, as carpenters, masons, stone-cutters, silversmiths, and other artisans." He then proceeds to speak of the persons who live by fishing, which was a great branch of commerce there, and of the many agriculturalists. He begs the King to send seeds* and

Means of support for the Mexican officers.

30,000 inhabitants: order re-established.

Mexican mechanics paid by daily wages.

* DAVILA mentions that the first grain of corn which sprung up was sown by a servant of Cortes: it produced four hundred-fold.—"Házense grandes cosechas: dos vezes se coge trigo en el año. Y para que se vea la pujança, y poderío de la tierra, Juan Garrido, criado de

Agriculture to be encouraged.

fruits from Spain, "as the natives of these parts are very fond of cultivating the earth and rearing plantations."† Finally, he concludes by telling the Emperor that in the Spanish part of the town there are many houses already built, and many begun; and that in five years' time it will be "the most noble and populous city in the world, and with very fine buildings." He adds that there are two large market-places, one in the Mexican, and the other in the Spanish quarter.

Prospects for Mexico.

It may seem ungracious, when recounting so many acts of great sagacity on the part of Cortes in the civil and military government of Mexico and its dependencies, to comment upon any error or omission. But there is one matter which pre-eminently demanded the attention of Cortes, and to which, as far as we know, he does not appear

---

Hernando Cortés sembró en un huerto tres granos de trigo; perdióse el uno, y los dos dieron mas de quatrocientos granos, y poco á poco se cogió infinito trigo; y de lo què es de regadío se coge en mayor abundancia; porque un grano produce docientos y mas."—Gil Gonzalez Davila, *Teatro Eclesiástico*, tom. i. p. 8.

† "Segun los Naturales de estas partes son Amigos de cultivar las Tierras, y de traher Arboledas."—Lorenzana, p. 376.

to have given his usual forecasting thought. For the good government of the nations he had conquered, for the advantageous settlement of the Spaniards themselves, and especially for the completion of the conquest with the least possible effusion of blood and waste of treasure, it was above all things necessary that the Indians and the Spaniards should understand one another. An interpreter was worth an army; and it is almost impossible to appreciate the nature of the conquest thoroughly, in all its horrors and in all its difficulties, without a constant recollection of the fact that opposing armies, that allies, that governors and their subjects, and that even masters and their servants had, for the most part, only the rudest means of communication. The Church, containing the learned men of the day, was sure to undertake, and did undertake, the remedy for this great evil. It may be said that Cortes waited for the advent of the Franciscans and Dominicans, whom he more than once petitioned the Court of Spain to send to the new country. But it must be owned that it would have completed the manifestation of his sagacity, if he had taken any steps at once for training some few Spaniards and some

The value of interpreters.

few Indians as interpreters. Geronimo de Aguilar died some time in the first three or four years after the taking of Mexico, and the Indian woman, Marina, the once-beloved of Cortes, from whom he derived the name by which he was generally known, *Malinche* (the Lord of Marina), was probably the only very good interpreter then left. After Cortes, she must be considered to have been the most important personage—the one who could least be spared—in New Spain.

Cortes on the subject of conversion.

An object which Cortes never lost sight of, was the conversion of the natives. In his report to the Emperor, dated the 15th of October, 1524, he says that, "as many times as I have written to your Sacred Majesty, I have told your Highness of the readiness which there is in some of the natives of these parts to receive our Holy Catholic Faith, and become Christians. And I have sent to supplicate your Imperial Majesty that you would have the goodness to provide religious persons, of good life and example, for that end." Cortes then proceeds to suggest that these should be monastic persons, and he speaks very plainly against bishops and other prelates. This is the passage which, I imagine, has led some ingenious

persons to believe that Cortés was inclined to the Protestant doctrines. To my mind, it is to be explained by his great desire for conversion, in which he wisely foresaw the religious Orders would be most useful. Perhaps, also, his dislike to Bishop Fonseca, who was at the head of the India Office in the mother country, may be traced in this general outbreak against bishops.

Cortes adverse to bishops.

It must have been with great satisfaction, that Cortes in this year (1524) had to welcome the arrival of Martin de Valencia and his Franciscan brethren.

Arrival of the Franciscans. 1524.

As there were many things connected with the Church in the New World which required settlement, a synod was immediately held. It consisted of five *clérigos*, nineteen *religiosos*, six *letrados*, and Cortes himself.* At this synod the difficult

---

* "Y para que en todo se procediesse conforme á lo dispuesto por la Santa Madre Iglesia. Fray Martin de Valencia, como Legado del Santíssimo Papa, juntó un Synodo, que fué el primero que se celebró en el Nuevo Mundo, y en él se hallaron, 5 Clérigos, 19 Religiosos, 6 Letrados, y con ellos D. Fernando Cortes."—GIL GONZALEZ DAVILA, *Teatro Eclesiástico*, tom. i. p. 20.

"Ultimamente habiendose ocurrido á la Cathedra de San Pedro, decidió el Señor Paulo III. por un Breve, en

question of polygamy was discussed; and it was arranged that the Indian husband might choose as his legal wife the one he liked best.

Few conquerors or statesmen can have transacted more important affairs than we see that Cortes had to deal with in the three years and two months that had now elapsed since the Conquest of Mexico.

---

que expresamente manda, que quando uno viniesse á la Fé, se le dé la primera de las Mugeres que tenia en su Gentilidad; y si no supiesse declarar qual era la primera, se le dé la que el quisiesse."—F. A. LORENZANA, *Concilios Provinciales de Mexico*, Nota, p. 6. Mexico, 1769.

CHAPTER XIV.

The Expeditions sent out by Cortes to conquer and to colonize—The Expedition of Alvarado.

CORTES was a man of insatiable activity. It might have been thought that, after the conquest of Mexico, the rebuilding and repeopling of the city would have sufficiently exhausted the energies even of that active man. But it was not so. He is chiefly known to the world by that conquest of Mexico, which, for its audacity, stands unrivalled in the annals of mankind; but he was subsequently employed in further conquests, which cost him far more labour and suffering, but have hardly added at all to his renown, so little time and thought can men spare for a thorough investigation of the lives and deeds of even their most remarkable fellow-men.

Almost in the next page of his third letter to the Emperor, after that in which he describes the siege and capture of Mexico, Cortes begins to inform His Majesty what steps he has taken for the discovery of that which he calls "the other Sea of the South."

News of the fall of Mexico.

After the last discharge of the cannon of Cortes had been made upon the helpless but unyielding crowd of Mexico, the news of the city's fall was not slow in reaching the adjacent territories.

How it sped.

Along the glad shores of the lakes, up the vast rocky basin in which those glistening waters and the gemlike cities were set, through all the defiles of the mountains, down the rivers, across the elevated plains of Mexico, from the eastern to the western sea, southwards to powerful Utatlan, and northwards to virgin California, sped the news.

The citizens of well-ordered states communed together upon the fate of the greatest of cities known to them. The travelling merchant told the tale, not unembellished, to his wondering auditors. The wandering huntsman, sitting at night by his watch-fire, held entranced the keen, bright eyes of other wanderers from scattered and

distant tribes, while he related to them new and unimagined feats of arms performed by bearded men and animals unknown in their prairies. All central America must soon have been aware that their "Babylon the Great had fallen."

And how did the listeners receive the astonishing news? With joy, regret, and apprehension: joy, that a ruthless enemy, to whose fell gods their young men and their maidens had been sacrificed, was now no more; regret, that they, the injured, had had no part in the misfortunes of the detested city; and apprehension, lest a worse thing should come upon them than even the power of the hateful Aztecs. A dead enemy is soon forgotten. The most gigantic fear leaves but little trace behind. A huge idol, once cast down from its pedestal, or a fallen minister of tyranny dragged ignominiously through the streets, is reviled, cursed, stamped upon to-day, and buried in oblivion to-morrow. Past terrors live again only in men's dreams. All that the neighbouring nations had suffered from the hideous Aztec gods would be forgotten in the new terror, which, like Aaron's rod, had devoured the puny enchantments of false magicians.

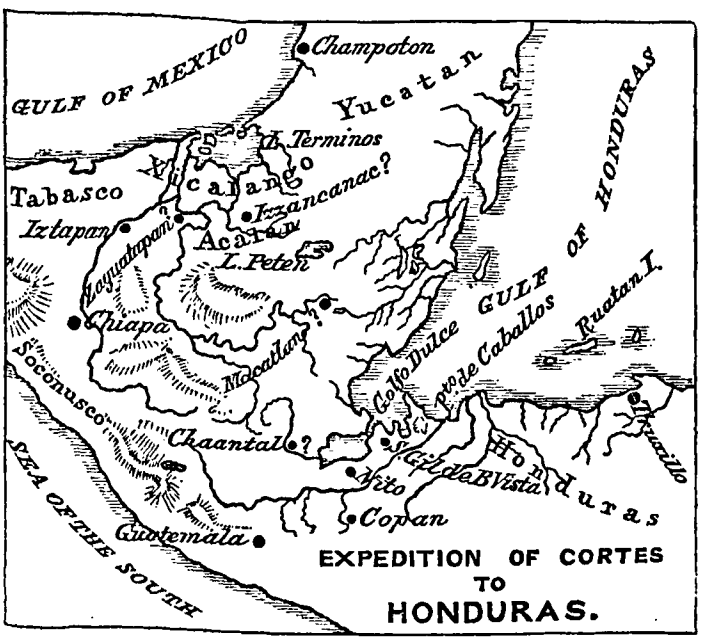
How the news was received in the neighbouring states.

The fall of Mexico must have produced an impression on the chiefs of the neighbouring states far greater than that which would have been felt throughout Germany at the defeat of an emperor by a foreign enemy; or throughout France, in the early days of French sovereignty over many provinces, at a similar defeat of their lord paramount, the French monarch; or throughout Christendom, at the capture by the Moslem of imperial Constantinople.

The conquest of the New World: its first aspect to the conquered.

Indeed, the defeat of the dwellers in the New World by those from the Old was not, in its first aspect, like the defeat of men by men; but it seemed as if that ancient giant race, the children of women by the sons of gods, not immersed by any deluge, but for ages safely dwelling amidst the mountains of the Caucasus, and hitherto lapped in a sublime indifference to human concerns, had now, obeying some wild, mysterious impulse, burst out upon the miserable descendants of mere men and women. These new beings might be tutelar divinities, might be destroying angels; but there was no doubt that they came forth, clothed in what seemed celestial panoply, "conquering and to conquer."

The Indian kings who were opposed to the Mexican dynasty, no less than those who were allied to it, shuddered at the success of these awful invaders from another sphere. The first potentate



who sent ambassadors to Cortes was the King of Mechoacan, a province about seventy leagues to the south-west of Mexico. From these ambassadors, Cortes, who had already heard something about this "Sea of the South," made further in-

Ambassadors from Mechoacan.

quiries. He found that it was to be reached through Mechoacan; and, accordingly, after causing his cavalry to manœuvre before these Mechoacan ambassadors, so as to impress them with a fitting sense of his power, and after making them some presents, he sent two Spaniards back with them on a journey of discovery. Hearing still more about this sea from other quarters, he sent in different directions two other parties of Spaniards to explore the way to the sea, and to take "possession" of it. He seems to have been fully aware of the importance of this discovery, for he says,—"I was very proud, for it appeared to me that, in discovering it, His Majesty would receive a great and signal service; since," he adds, "it was the decided opinion of all men who had any knowledge or experience in the navigation of the Indies, that when this sea was discovered, many islands would be found in it, abounding in gold, pearls, precious stones, and spices."* Cortes

Cortes sends to discover the Sea of the South.

* "Estaba muy ufano, porque me parecia, que en la descubrir se hacia á Vuestra Magestad muy grande, y señalado servicio: especialmente, que todos los que tienen alguna ciencia, y experiencia en la Navegacion de las Indias, han tenido por muy cierto, que descubriendo por

thought, moreover, that many "secrets and wonderful things" were yet to be discovered there. From this faith in what was marvellous the first explorers and conquerors derived an ardour in pursuit, and an untiring love of novelty, which reminds one of the same qualities as they exist in the untravelled souls of little children.

Discovery of the Sea of the South. 1522.

As the sea was at no great distance, it was soon discovered by one or other of the parties sent out to explore; and formal possession was taken of it in the name of the Emperor, some time in the year 1522, nine years after the discovery of the same sea by Vasco Nuñez, about a thousand miles lower down.

Embassage from Tehuantepec.

Following the embassage from Mechoacan, there arrived at the camp of Cortes another set of envoys, from a people about a hundred leagues further south than Mechoacan, inhabiting a maritime country called Tehuantepec, which, it appears, was the territory where one of these parties of discovering Spaniards had come upon the Sea of the South. These Indians, as was usually the case,

---

estas Partes la Mar del Sur, se habian de hallar muchas Islas ricas de Oro, y Perlas, y Piedras preciosas, y Especeria."—LORENZANA, p. 302.

were at war with their next neighbours, the inhabitants of a country called Tututepec. Immediately south of Tehuantepec lies the province of Soconusco, and south of that is Guatemala. Following the usual rule, these two last-named provinces were also at feud with one another. The great political doctrine of the balance of power was but beginning to be understood in Europe in those days, and was totally beyond the compass of Indian statesmanship. Accordingly, a similar series of events to those which had enabled Cortes to reach and to conquer Mexico was now to conduct his lieutenants into the southern provinces of Central America. These two provinces of Tututepec and Tehuantepec, which, from the similarity of their names, we may fairly conjecture to have been inhabited by tribes of the same race, were the first to give occasion to the stranger to enter armed into their territories; for Cortes, at the request of the envoys from Tehuantepec, despatched Pedro de Alvarado with a body of troops to conquer the unfriendly province of Tututepec. This province, however, does not seem to have received the lieutenant of Cortes with extreme hostility, or, at least, to have made any

Cortes sends Alvarado to Tututepec.

effectual resistance. After a few skirmishes, Pedro de Alvarado made his way into the town of Tututepec, where he was well received, and was furnished with provisions and presented with gold. The hostile Indians, however, of the next province, Tehuantepec, suggested that all this friendly demonstration was but feigned, and that an offer which the Cacique had made to the Spaniards, to lodge them in his own palace, was but a scheme to destroy them by setting their quarters on fire. Pedro de Alvarado believed this accusation, or affected to believe it, and seized upon the person of the Cacique, who, after giving much money to his captor, died in prison. That this seizure of the Cacique was thought unjust even by the Spaniards of that time is proved by the testimony of Bernal Diaz.* There is no novelty in this proceeding of Alvarado. Indeed, the dealings of the Spaniards with the

Alvarado's treatment of the Cacique of Tututepec.

* "Otros Españoles de fé, y de creer, dixeron que por sacalle mucho oro, é sin justicia, murió en las prisiones: aora sea lo uno, ó lo o, otr aquel Cacique dió á Pedro de Alvarado mas de triente mil pesos, y murió de enojo, y de la prision."—BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 161.

Indians seem, at this period of the Conquest, to be arranged according to a certain routine, in which the capture of the principal chief is seldom omitted; and it is worth while to notice the imprisonment of the Cacique of Tututepec merely because it is the first of a series of such proceedings on the part of Alvarado, who was the principal conqueror of Central America.

Alvarado's character.

His qualifications for command, as far as they appear in the page of history, were not of the highest order. He was grave, daring, restless, crafty, devout, but without any true policy. He was a great talker; but still, I should imagine, a man of considerable force, if not skill, in action, as he was largely trusted by Cortes.

Alvarado's personal appearance.

Alvarado's personal appearance was much in his favour. It is thus described by Bernal Diaz. "He had a fine and well-proportioned figure. His face and countenance were very lively, with a very amiable expression; and, from being so handsome, the Mexican Indians gave him the name of Tonatiuh, which means 'the Sun.' He was very agile, and a good horseman, and above all, a frank being, and a pleasant companion. In his dress he was very elegant, and wore rich

stuffs."* Alvarado was nearly the same age as Cortes, for Bernal Diaz says that he was about thirty-four years old when he came to New Spain. In his daring qualities and brilliant appearance he may be compared to Murat; and his relation to Cortes may not inaptly be compared with that of the King of Naples to the first Napoleon.

Alvarado founded a town in Tututepec, which he called Segura; but, on account of the heat of the climate and the swarms of insects, it was soon deserted. This expedition of Alvarado's took place in the year 1522.

Interview between the Spanish messengers and the Chief of Guatemala.

From the seat of his new conquest Pedro de Alvarado despatched two messengers to Guatemala (called by the Indians Quauhtemallán, the place of wood, or of decayed wood), who were to offer on the part of Cortes "his friendship and his religion" to the Chief of that province.

The chief asked these messengers whether they came from Malinché, whether they had made their journey by sea or by land, and whether they would speak the truth in all that they should say. They replied that they always did speak

* "Bernal Diaz," cap. 206.

the truth; that they had come by land; and that they were sent by Cortes, the invincible Captain of the Emperor of the World, a mortal man, and not a god, but one who came to show the Indians the way to immortality.*

The Chief then asked, whether their Captain brought with him those great sea-monsters which had passed by that coast the previous year.† The messengers replied, "Yes, and even greater ones;" and one of them, who was a ship's carpenter, made a drawing of a *carack* with six masts, at which the Indians marvelled greatly. The Chief

---

* "Embió á Quauhtemallán dos Españoles, que hablasen con el Señor, í le ofreciesen su amistad, í Religion: el qual preguntó, *si eran de Malinxe* (que así llamaban á Cortés), *Dios caído del Cielo, de quien iá tenia noticia: si venian por Mar, ó por Tierra, í si dirian verdad en todo lo que hablasen?* Ellos respondieron, *que siempre hablaban verdad, í que iban á pié por Tierra, í que eran de Cortés, Capitan invencible del Emperador del Mundo, Hombre mortal, í no Dios; pero que venia á mostrar el camino de la inmortalidad.*"—GOMARA, *Hist. de las Indias*, cap. 207. BARCIA, *Historiadores*, tom. ii.

† The ships in question were those in the expedition of Gil Gonçalez Davila, who discovered Nicaragua.—GOMARA, *de el descubrimiento de Nicaragua*, chap. 199; *Hist. de las Indias*. BARCIA, *Historiadores*, tom. ii.

then asked them if the Spaniards were not very valiant, and stronger than other men. They replied that, with the aid of God, whose sacred law they were publishing in those parts, and by means of certain animals on which they rode, they were accustomed to conquer. Then, to assist the imaginations of the Guatemalans, they painted a great horse, with a man in armour upon it. The Guatemalan Chief declared that he should like to be the friend of such men, and would give them fifty thousand warriors, in order that his men and theirs united might conquer some troublesome neighbours, who devastated his country. These neighbours were the Soconuscans. This kind of alliance with the Spaniards was the first thought always of the too-confiding Indians; and unluckily they had no Pilpay or Æsop to tell them the fable of the foolish horse who called in the assistance of man to conquer his enemy the stag, and who with that pernicious aid did conquer him, and has been much vexed and beridden by his associate ever since.

Interview between the Spanish messengers and the Chief of Guatemala.

After this interview, the Spanish messengers were dismissed with magnificent presents of gold, jewels, and provisions, which, it is said, required

no fewer than five thousand men to carry them. Such was the first notice which the Spaniards received of Guatemala.

Embassage from Guatemala to Cortes.

Returning now to the camp of Cortes at Mexico, we find him informing the Emperor, in the year 1524, that from Utatlan and Guatemala an embassage of an hundred persons had come, offering themselves as vassals to the Spanish monarchy, whom he had received and dismissed with every mark of friendship. Meanwhile, however, this indefatigable commander had made friends with the Soconuscans, and had even begun ship-building on that part of the coast. The Guatemalans, when their embassage returned home, being assured of the friendship of Cortes, were only the more inclined on that account to carry war into the territories of their enemies the Soconuscans, and thus they did not fail to come into collision with the settlers sent out by Cortes. For this offence the Guatemalans apologized, but their excuses were not received. The words of Cortes to the Emperor are the following, and show the grounds of the beginning of the war:—"I have been informed by certain Spaniards, whom I have

in the province of Soconusco, how those cities, with their provinces (Utatlan and Guatemala), and another which is called Chiapa,* that is near them, do not maintain that good will which

they formerly showed, but, on the contrary, it is said that they do injury to the towns of Soconusco, because they (the Soconuscans) are our friends.

---

* This is the first mention of that district, afterwards to become renowned as the bishopric of Las Casas.

The said Christians also write to me that the Guatemalans have sent many messengers to exculpate themselves, saying that they did not do it, but others; and to ascertain the truth of this statement, I have sent Pedro de Alvarado, with eighty horsemen, and two hundred foot-soldiers, amongst whom were several cross-bowmen and arquebusiers, and four cannon, with much ammunition and powder.*

Pretext of Cortes for invading Guatemala.

It does not need much knowledge of history, nor much experience of life, to foresee what kind of truth would be discovered by this formidable† armament; and it may be useful to notice the mode of interference of a powerful state in the affairs of smaller ones, when it comes before us in this clear and marked way, without any of the complications of nice and difficult diplomacy. This expedition, in which Pedro de Alvarado held the title of lieutenant-governor and captain-general, quitted Mexico on the 6th of December, 1523.

Alvarado commences his expedition against Guatemala, Dec. 1523.

* "Lorenzana," p. 350.

† I say "formidable," because, though the numbers of the Spaniards were few, they were probably accompanied by a numerous body of their Indian allies. In such an expedition as this, there would be at least a thousand or fifteen hundred Mexican auxiliaries.

CHAPTER XV.

Other expeditions sent out by Cortes to conquer and to colonize—Expedition under Sandoval.

THE expedition, which Cortes sent under the command of Alvarado, and which led to the conquest of Guatemala, was not by any means the only one which Cortes furnished and sent forth from Mexico. It would be useless to recount the doings of all these expeditions, but it will be desirable to follow the career of that one which was placed under the command of Sandoval. We may fairly conjecture that this commander was imbued with the spirit of his great friend and leader. The expedition was to colonize and conquer towards the sea of the North, and its chief settlements were made in, or near, the province now called Vera Cruz.

One of the objects of the expedition was to

punish the inhabitants of Tustepec, who, at the time of the retreat of Cortes from Mexico, had put to death sixty Spaniards and six Spanish ladies, who had belonged to the company of Narvaez. We have some interesting records of this expedition, because Bernal Diaz, the historian, accompanied Sandoval.

This garrulous historian answers a question which he is sure his readers will ask,—namely, how it was that the conquerors did not settle down in Mexico. He gives a sufficient answer by saying that—"We saw in the rent-books of Montezuma from what parts they brought him gold, and where he had mines and cacao and woollen stuffs; and when we saw, in the books, the provinces* from which they used to bring the tributes of gold for the great Montezuma, there we wished to go."

Cortes remonstrated with Bernal Diaz upon his leaving Mexico. "Upon my conscience, brother Bernal Diaz del Castillo, you are deluded. I wish you would stay with me. If, however, you have

* The neighbourhood of Mexico did not furnish these valuable products.

made up your mind to go with your friend Sandoval, go, and good luck go with you, and I will always have a care for your interest; but I know well that you will repent of leaving me."*

Sandoval commenced his expedition in October or November, 1522. He seems to have been very merciful in the punishment which he inflicted for the massacre of the Spanish men and women who had accompanied Narvaez. He condemned to death the principal chief, but allowed all the rest to go free. Sandoval then sent an expedition to the Zapotecs, a mountain tribe of hardy warriors. These people were very well armed. Their lances were longer than those of the Spanish soldiery, having a blade six feet long, in which were set "razors of flint," (*con una braza de cuchilla de Navajas de pedernal*) much sharper than a Spanish sword. They had light shields, which protected the whole body, and bows, pikes, and slings. These warlike people were successful in repulsing one of Sandoval's lieutenants, but ultimately it

---

* "Id en buena hora, é yo tendré siempre cuidado de lo que se os ofreciere, mas bien sé que os repentireis por me dexar."

appears that they submitted themselves to Sandoval of their own accord.

Sandoval then sent a message of peace to the inhabitants of the province of Xaltepec. It must not be supposed that when a Spanish commander sent a message of peace of this kind, it meant that the natives were to treat on equal terms with the Spaniards, and were to become allies. It meant that they were to allow themselves to be incorporated with the Crown of Spain, and to become dutiful vassals to their lord paramount, the Emperor. It also meant that they were to be apportioned to the Spaniards in *encomiendas*.

The Xaltepecs, however, thought it was better to belong to the Crown of Spain than to fight; and accordingly twenty of their chiefs presented themselves at the camp of Sandoval, bringing gold-dust in ten small tubes, besides "jewels of fine workmanship." The chiefs wore large cotton garments, which hung down to their feet, and were richly embroidered after the manner of a Moorish *bernous*. Sandoval received these chiefs most courteously, and gave them some glass beads. They were foolish enough to request his assistance against a neighbouring tribe; and he promised

that Malinché (Cortes was known by that name far and wide) would send a large body of *teules* to their assistance. Meanwhile Sandoval sent ten of his own companions, amongst whom was Bernal Diaz, to return with these chiefs to their own country. He pretended that he sent these men in order to see the passes, and to reconnoitre the country by which the Spaniards were to enter, when coming to assist these new allies of theirs. But his real motive was to ascertain where the gold was to be found. And when his emissaries did arrive in the province, their first care was to seek for this gold. They found it in the rivers, where, with the assistance of the natives, who, with something like the cradles used in modern times,* collected four tubes of gold dust. These Spaniards then returned to Sandoval.

Sandoval then divided the townships of that province amongst some of his followers; founded a town, which he named Medellin, in honour of the birthplace of Cortes, and moved on to the river Guacasualco. Here the natives submitted at once to Sandoval; and he gave *encomiendas* of

---

* "Unas como hechuras de bateas."

these to his companions, in which division of the subdued country Bernal Diaz had his share.

It was while Sandoval was founding a town near the river Guacasualco that he heard of a Spanish vessel which had come into a river about sixty miles from the Guacasualco. Donna Catalina, the wife of Cortes, and other ladies were on board this vessel.

Sandoval went to pay his respects to the ladies, and brought them back to Guacasualco, whence he despatched a courier to Mexico, to inform Cortes of the arrival of Donna Catalina. Shortly afterwards Donna Catalina and the other ladies, accompanied by Sandoval and some of his captains, proceeded to Mexico.

Cortes gave orders that his wife should have a splendid reception. On her road to the capital the greatest honours were paid to her; and when she arrived in Mexico, tournaments were held to signalize her arrival. She did not, however, live long to enjoy the great state which surrounded her, for she died in less than three months after she had rejoined her husband.

Bernal Diaz reports that Cortes was greatly vexed when he heard of the arrival of his wife.

This is one of those scandalous reports, to which great men are peculiarly liable, and which do not admit of any refutation, simply because there is nothing tangible to refute. There is no evidence whatever to show that Cortes was displeased with his wife's arrival, and some evidence to the contrary. And there is no reason to believe that what he said to Las Casas did not apply to this time as well as to the time when he married her, namely, " that he was as well pleased with her as if she had been the daughter of a duchess."

CHAPTER XVI.

The Dealings of Cortes with the Natives, as regards apportioning them to his Spaniards.

AT this juncture it may be told what course Cortes pursued in granting *encomiendas* and allowing his captains to make these grants in his name. At this time Cortes, no doubt, held that he had full power to give *encomiendas.* But in this year, and probably while Sandoval was, with plenary audacity, dividing provinces amongst his soldiers, a great junta, summoned by Charles V., was being held at Valladolid, to consider the whole question of Spanish supremacy in the Indies. This junta declared that "since God, our Lord, created the Indians free, we cannot command that they should be given in *encomienda.*" * Las Casas, in an address to the

* "I la razon que la Real cédula expressa es, que

Emperor many years after, reminds His Majesty that Cortes had been commanded to revoke all that he had done in this matter; "but the sinner, for his own interest, did not like to do it, and Your Majesty thought always that it had been done, all people concealing the truth from Your Majesty."* It would have been very difficult, however, for Cortes to have revoked the orders he had already given on this subject; and, in a letter to the Emperor, dated the 15th of October, 1524, he says that he has made certain ordinances, of

The prohibition not enforced by Cortes.

haziendo relacion de la dicha Junta, dize: *Pareció, que Nos, con buenas conciencias, pues Dios nuestro Señor crió los dichos Indios libres, i no sujetos, no podemos mandarlos encomendar, ni hazer repartimiento dellos á los Cristianos, i ansí es nuestra voluntad que se cumpla.*"—ANTONIO DE LEON, *Confirmaciones Reales*, parte i. cap. 1.

* "Y el pecador por su proprio interesse no lo quizo hazer; y vuestra Magestad pensó siempre que lo havia hecho, encubriendo todos á vuestra Magestad la verdad." —LAS CASAS, *Entre los Remedios que Don Fray Bartholome de Las Casas, Obispo de la Ciudad Real de Chiapa, refirió por mandado del Emperador Rey nuestro señor, en los ayuntamientos que mandó hazer su Magestad de Prelados, y Letrados, y personas grandes en Valladolid el año de mil é quinientos y quarenta y dos, para reformacion de las Indias*, Razon xix. p. 205. Seville, 1552.

which he sends a copy to His Majesty. The copy has been lost, but the orders manifestly related to this subject of *encomiendas*. He intimates that the Spaniards are not very well satisfied with these orders, especially with one which prevented absenteeism, compelling them, to use the strong expression of Cortes, "to root themselves in the land."* He seems to have been aware that these ordinances rather contradicted what he had formerly said to the Emperor: for, after advising their confirmation, he adds, that for new events there are new opinions and counsels; "and, if in some of those things which I have said, or shall hereafter say to Your Majesty, it shall appear to you that I contradict some of my past opinions, let Your Excellency believe that a new state of things makes me give a different opinion."

Las Casas is quite wrong when he supposes that Cortes did not inform the Emperor that his

* "De algunas de ellas los Españoles, que en estas partes residen, no estan muy satisfechos, en especial de aquellas, que los obligan á arraigarse en la Tierra, porque todos, ó los mas, tienen pensamientos de se háber con estas Tierras, como se han habido con las Islas, que antes se poblaron, que es esquilmarlas, y destruirlas, y despues dejarlas."—LORENZANA, p. 397.

Majesty's commands with regard to *encomiendas* and other matters connected with the welfare of the natives, had not been obeyed. A confidential letter from Cortes to the Emperor has recently been discovered. It is dated October 15th, 1524, and probably accompanied an official despatch from Cortes of the same date. In it Cortes gives admirable reasons why he does not obey, or even make known, the orders of his Majesty until the Emperor has had an opportunity of reconsidering them. This letter is eminently creditable to Cortes; and shows that he had carefully considered the question of how the natives were to be dealt with. The Emperor had given a very foolish order, namely, that the Spaniards should be allowed to have free converse with the Indians, by which it was meant that they might go away from their own *encomiendas* into Indian towns and villages, which were free from Spaniards. Charles the Fifth, with a most unusual want of sagacity on his part, wished for this free converse because it would lead to conversion. Now Cortes had not allowed his Spaniards to go into the Indian territories unless they had a license for so doing: in fact, he only allowed those to go whom

Why Cortes did not obey the Emperor.

he could trust. He tells the Emperor that as to busying themselves in converting the natives, these errant Spaniards will do nothing of the kind. They are, for the most part, people of low origin and little education. If they are allowed to go amongst the Indian villages, they will produce nothing but mischief and tyranny and discord. Experience in the islands has taught him how those islands have become depopulated; and he wishes to prevent a similar sad result in the lands that he has discovered and conquered.

As regards the *encomiendas*, he tells the Emperor that he cannot take them away, because the Spaniards will have nothing to live upon; and, practically, the conquest must be given up. These *encomiendas* should be looked upon, not as slavery, but as freedom for the Indians, when compared with what they endured under their former masters. Indeed, when the Indians behave ill, they are terrified into obedience by the threat of restoring them to their former masters.

The tenor of this letter is such that I do not doubt if Las Casas had read it, he would have looked upon Cortes rather as a saint than as a

sinner, at least as regards his aspirations for the welfare of the conquered Indians of Mexico.

The whole truth of the matter is, that the greatest part of the sufferings of the Indians in New Spain proceeded from the quarrels of the Spaniards amongst themselves, and also from the jealousy which naturally prevailed at the Spanish Court of any great conqueror such as Cortes. People were always insinuating into the Emperor's mind that Cortes was seeking a crown for himself. Nothing could be more unjust. Cortes was one of the most faithful servants the Emperor ever had. And, moreover, Cortes understood how great was the power of the Spanish Monarch. As His Majesty's representative, Cortes was everything. Without the authority and prestige which that representation gave him, he was nothing; and he knew it. If Cortes had, from the first, been created Viceroy of Mexico, that great province would have been the brightest jewel in the Spanish crown.

Charles the Fifth is hardly to be blamed for not having trusted Cortes sufficiently; for this great Monarch lived in such an atmosphere of intrigue that it was almost natural that he should

suspect everybody. Everywhere, throughout his European dominions, Charles had to dread deceit and conspiracy. That age was an age especially to be noted for diplomatic falsehood. The history of the relations between England, France and Spain at that period betray the existence of an almost inextricable mass of confusion, treachery and deceit. As you pursue the pages of this history, you can hardly guess, from page to page, what will be the next combination—whether it will be France and England against Spain, or France and Spain against England, or England and Spain against France.

The best points of Charles the Fifth's character, and indeed of the characters of his successors, are to be seen in their colonial administration. Indeed, their liberality and their anxiety for the welfare of their Indian subjects are sometimes surprising, when compared with the rest of their administration. But it was not given to them, certainly not to Charles the Fifth, who had to deal with the first conquerors in the Indies, to put implicit trust in the fidelity of those who had discovered and conquered great kingdoms in the Indies, and had added them to the Spanish Crown.

CHAPTER XVII.

Christoval De Olid sent by Cortes to Honduras—his Rebellion—Cortes goes to Honduras to chastise Christoval de Olid—Dissensions in Mexico during his Absence—Execution of the Kings of Mexico and Tlacuba—Return of Cortes to Mexico—Ponce de Leon comes to take a Residencia of Cortes.

THE next great enterprise which Cortes undertook is one that led to the most disastrous consequences, and is not, as it appears to me, marked by his accustomed sagacity. Even the shrewdest men, however, are liable to singular errors of judgment, from the temptation to continue to do something similar to that which they have once done well. In the management of an expedition through a hostile or dubious country, Cortes was transcendent. But a sagacity of another kind was more in demand now; and for some years he would have served his country

better as a statesman and a governor than as a soldier.

Christoval de Olid sent to Honduras, Jan. 1524.

Soon after the settlement of the affairs of Panuco, Cortes had despatched Christoval de Olid, one of those captains who had distinguished themselves in the siege of Mexico, to make a settlement in Honduras. This expedition started on the 11th of January, 1524. Christoval de Olid proved unfaithful to his trust, and gave undeniable signs of setting up an independent government for himself. Cortes was particularly indignant at the conduct of Olid; and his rage, shown by the swelling of the veins in his throat and the dilating of his nostrils, must have been closely watched and reported to the Council of the Indies at home, for we find that Peter Martyr, at Madrid, was well aware of it.* Cortes despatched an armament commanded by his cousin, Francisco

* "Super Christofori Oliti, de quo lata mentio facta est in superioribus, inobservantia, Cortesium tanta rabies invasit, ut vivere ulterius nolle videretur Olito impunito, cum narium et venarum gutturis summo tumore præ ira, sæpe dedit de tanta animi perturbatione signa, neque a verbis id significantibus abstinuit."—PETER MARTYR, *De Orbe Novo*, dec. viii. cap. 10.

de las Casas, to reduce Olid to obedience; and afterwards sent, to support Las Casas, a vessel laden with arms and provisions, under a certain Pedro Gonzalez, a native of Truxillo, and, therefore, a fellow-townsman of Cortes. Having, however, received no good tidings from these captains, the General resolved to go himself, and bring Olid to a sense of his duty. The journey was a most perilous one. The settlement which Olid had made was not less than fifteen hundred miles from Mexico; and the King's officers (who had arrived at Mexico in the year 1524) naturally remonstrated with Cortes upon his undertaking such an expedition. It is probable that their remonstrance did not meet the considerations which induced Cortes to undertake this expedition Almost any other man in the world, if employed as Cortes had been since the conquest of Mexico, would have supposed, and justly, that he had been leading a very active and energetic life. But Cortes felt that for some time he had been idle, and had done no new thing; and it now appeared to him that he "must engage in something."*

Cortes resolved to go to Honduras.

* "Dada órden para en lo de Cristoval Dolid como á

What he calls his idleness had been caused by his having broken his arm; and though that injury was not healed, he would not allow it to hinder him from active enterprise any longer. Accordingly he determined to persevere with this expedition, and he made his preparations for quitting Mexico in the following manner. He appointed the Treasurer, Alonso de Estrada (a natural son of Ferdinand the Catholic), and the Contador Albornoz as his Lieutenants in the government. He named as Alcalde Mayor the Licentiate Zuazo, a great friend of the Clerigo Las Casas. He left Rodrigo de Paz, a cousin of his, as his Major-domo, and as Alguazil Mayor. To all of these officers, to his old friend and companion in the conquest, Father Olmedo, and to a Franciscan monk, named Toribio Motolinia, he left the charge of converting the natives, and of

Cortes provides for the government of Mexico during his absence.

V. M. escribí, porque me pareció que ya habia mucho tiempo que mi persona estaba ociosa y no hacia cosa de nuevo de que V. M. sirviese a causa de la lesion de mi brazo, aunque no muy libre de ella, me pareció que debia de entender en algo."—*Relacion hecha al* EMPERADOR CARLOS V. *por* HERNAN CORTÉS *sobre la expedicion de Honduras. De Temixtitan (Méjico) á 3 de Setiembre, de* 1526. *Documentos Inéditos*, tom. iv. p. 10.

preventing insurrections. In order to secure the fidelity of the natives, he carried with him the Kings of Mexico and Tlacuba, with other Mexican lords. The 12th of October, 1524, was the day on which Cortes quitted Mexico, and commenced this expedition.

Cortes quits Mexico, Oct. 12, 1524.

It was a very gallant company that Cortes took with him on this memorable expedition. At the head of the old *Conquistadores* was Gonzalo de Sandoval, the former Alguazil Mayor, and the constant companion-in-arms of Cortes. As spiritual advisers, the Spanish Commander had in his suite a friar of the Order of Mercy, named Juan de las Verillas, a *clérigo* whose name is not given, and two Flemish monks of the Franciscan Order, whom Bernal Diaz pronounces to have been good theologians.

The companions of Cortes.

The members of his own household, who accompanied Cortes, were his Master of the Household, his Chief Sewer (*maestresala*), his Vintner (*botillero*),* his Pantler, his Steward (*despensero*),

His household.

---

* "*Botillero.* Potionum gelidarum conditor."—*Diccionario por la Academia Española.* This would be an important officer in a hot country.

and his Chamberlain.* He took with him a physician and a surgeon; and his suite included several pages, two equerries, eight grooms, and two falconers. He had, moreover, several players on the clarionet, sackbut, and hautbois, a dancer on the tight-rope, and a juggler who made puppets dance. He also took mules and muleteers; and, lastly, which was by far the most important thing, a great herd of swine. As an interpreter he had only Doña Marina, for, as before stated, Geronimo de Aguilar was dead. Finally, Cortes took with him large quantities of gold and silver.

Many reasons of policy might be adduced for all this pomp. It might be said that such pomp was necessary in order to convey to the Mexicans an idea of his power and grandeur: that it was advisable, as tending to separate him a little from the familiarity of his old companions in arms: and, moreover, that it was a protection to him against sudden treachery or revolt. But the truth is, Cortes was fond of state, and always conducted himself as if he had been born to the use of it. He was a man in whose com-

Cortes liked state.

* See Bernal Diaz, cap, 174.

position there was much of melancholy, and who probably made no human being a partaker of his thoughts. Such men, it may be observed, are fond of numerous retinues and large households. They like to have many people about them who fill up life and give a movement to it, and in whom they need not confide. Like other great men and eminent soldiers, amongst whom Napoleon, Julius Cæsar, and Wallenstein might be numbered, Cortes was magnificent, without being in the least degree luxurious; and the service which such men require from those around them is such as not to minister to their indolence, but rather to increase their sphere of action.

What kind of friend Cortes was leaving behind him at Mexico in Albornoz, may be discerned from a letter which Peter Martyr sent to the Pope, and which forms a sort of postscript to his "Eighth Decade," bearing date the 20th of October, 1525. Peter Martyr was, fortunately for the interests of history, a member of the Council of the Indies; and, writing about this date, he mentions that letters in cipher have come from Albornoz, describing "the craft, the burning avarice,

Albornoz an enemy of Cortes.

and the scarcely concealed usurpation" of Cortes. These letters, too, came at a time when, as the historian justly remarks, suspicions were not wanting of the fidelity of Cortes. The judicious old man adds, "Time will judge whether these accusations are true, or whether they are fabricated in order to gain favour."* Certainly, Cortes by no means escaped the subsequent difficulties which such unrivalled transactions as his are sure to breed. His early career, not by any means unclouded, gave weight at Court to any accusations that might be brought against him from New Spain.

Besides the official persons to whom Cortes had given charge of the government during his

---

* "Arcanæ vero ac particulares litteræ a solo computatore Albornozio, regio a secretis, veniunt sub ignotis caracteribus, quos Zifras nuncupat usus, discedenti Albornozio assignatos, quod ab eo tempore suspitione de animo Cortesii non careremus. Hæ contra Cortesii vafros astus et ardentem avariciam ac semiapertam tyrannidem formatæ sunt, an ex vero, an, uti sæpe solet, captandæ gratiæ causa hæc fabricata sint, judicabit aliquando tempus; delecti namque jam sunt viri graves ad hæc inquirenda mittendi. Quando latentia nunc hæc patefient, beatitudini tuæ significabuntur."—PETER MARTYR, *De Orbe Novo*, dec. viii. cap. 10.

absence, there were two other officers of the King, powerful personages, namely the Factor, Gonçalo de Salaçar, and the Veedor (Inspector), Peralmindez Chirinos, and these men were much disgusted at being left in a kind of subjection to those whom they considered colleagues. Finding, however, that they could not dissuade Cortes from his enterprise, they begged permission to accompany him as far as Espíritu Santo* in Coatzacualco, a new town of the Spaniards, which was situated a hundred and ten leagues south-east from Mexico. On the road the Factor, as he

The Factor and the Veedor discontented.

---

* This town had been founded by Sandoval, when he was sent to reduce several provinces south-east of Mexico which, according to the language of Cortes, had rebelled, and which had all been under the government of a woman. Cortes thus relates the founding of this town.—"Y él tubo tan buen órden, que con saltear una noche un Pueblo, donde prendió una Señora, á quien todos en aquellas partes obedecian, se apaciguó, porque ella embió á llamar todos los Señores, y les mandó, que obedeciessen lo que se les quisiesse mandar en nombre de Vuestra Magestad, porque ella assí lo habia de hacer: é assí llegaron hasta el dicho Rio, y á quatro leguas de la boca de él, que sale á la Mar, porque mas cerca no se halló asiento, se pobló, y fundó una Villa, á la qual se puso nombre el Espíritu Santo."—LORENZANA, p. 331.

travelled next to Cortes, did not fail to renew his remonstrances in scraps of song, as the manner of that age was:—

"Ay tio bolvámonos,
Ay tio bolvámonos;" *

to which Cortes was wont to sing in reply—

"Adelante mi sobrino,
Adelante mi sobrino,
Y no creais en agüeros
Que será lo que Dios quisiere
Adelante mi sobrino." †

Estrada and Albornoz quarrel.

Unfortunately, before Cortes and his army reached Espíritu Santo, a feud broke out at Mexico between Alonso de Estrada and Rodrigo Albornoz about the appointment of some minor officer; and the feud rose to such a height that swords were drawn, or were about to be drawn. Information of this quarrel soon reached the ears of Cortes, and

---

* Alas, uncle, let us return,
Alas, uncle, let us return.

† Onwards, my nephew,
Onwards, my nephew,
Put no trust in auguries,
That which God pleases, will be,
Onwards, my nephew.
—Bernal Diaz, cap. 174.

it naturally added great weight to the Factor's remonstrances. He was a false, flattering, obsequious man. Cortes, no doubt, believed him

to be a true friend; and, in an evil hour, drew up a despatch, by which he authorized the Factor and the Veedor to be joined in the same authority with the Treasurer and the Contador, and even to supersede these two last-named officers, in case they should not have composed their differences.

Cortes gives the Factor and the Veedor authority.

From the known astuteness of Cortes, men found it difficult to suppose that any action of his was without some subtle motive; and imagined that, as he knew that all the King's officers had written home unfavourably about him, it would tend to damage their representations if it were found that they could not agree amongst themselves.* Cortes, however, was too fond of good government to adopt such a scheme as this; and his plan of associating the Factor and the Veedor with the other two King's officers does not appear to have been an unreasonable one. The only blame to which Cortes seems liable in the matter, is in the absence of his usual sharp discernment of men's characters, and that he failed to perceive what a flattering rogue† the Factor was.

---

* "Sabia, que todos, de conformidad, avian escrito al Rei, informándole mal de su Persona, y le parecia, que si entre ellos avia discordias, se deshacia todo el mal, que de él avian escrito; pero nunca pensó, que las diferencias llegaran á tanto extremo."—TÓRQUEMADA, *Monarquía Indiana*, lib. v. cap. 2. See also HERRERA, dec. III. lib. vi. cap. 2.

† Bernal Diaz gives, in few words, a ludicrous account of the parting, and especially of the almost sobbing adieus of the Factor.—"Pero dexemos esto, y diré, que quando se despidieron el Factor, y el Veedor de Cortés para se bolver á México, con quantos cumplimientos, y

Armed with these powers, the Factor and the Veedor went back to Mexico, and, though the others had come to an agreement, the newly-arrived lieutenants sought to gain the whole power for themselves. From this dispute arose a state of confusion which lasted during nearly the entire period that Cortes was absent. It will be needless for me to recount the various intrigues, conspiracies, and surprizes which occupied the colonists of Mexico for the twenty months that Cortes was absent during his perilous journey in Honduras. The result of them was this. Rodrigo de Paz, the cousin and major-domo of Cortes, was first imprisoned; then tortured, in order to make him discover treasure; and finally hanged. The house of Cortes, in Mexico, was plundered; and the land about it ploughed and dug up. Zuazo, who was a just man, was deprived of his wand of office and banished to Medellin; and the Factor rose to supreme power, which he exercised in the most shameful manner.* A report, which

The Factor and the Veedor seek to usurp the whole authority..

Utter confusion in the Government of Mexico. 1524 to 1526.

---

abraços, y tenia el Factor una manera como de sollozos, que parecia que queria llorar al despedirse."—BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 174.

* As an instance of the sinister dealings of the

Report in Mexico of the death of Cortes.

was very credible, of the deaths of Cortes and all his companions, gave strength to the machinations of the Factor. Funeral services were performed for Cortes at Mexico, and his effects were deposited in the hands of an officer whose duty it was to take charge of the property of defunct persons.* So indignant was the Factor at any disbelief in the death of Cortes (a convenient witness had seen the spirits of Cortes and Sandoval, in flames, near the site of the great temple of Huitzilopochtli), that he ordered Juana de Marsilla, the wife of Alonso Valiente, to be publicly whipped through the streets for a witch, because she obstinately declared that Cortes and her husband (his secretary) were alive, and that she would not marry again.

Factor it may be observed that he endeavoured, as many wicked civil governors have done since, to bring his enemy within the grasp of the Inquisition; but Martin de Valencia declared that Rodrigo de Paz had confessed, was absolved, and was a good Christian.—TORQUEMADA, *Monarquía Indiana*, lib. v. cap. 2.

* "Se apoderaron de todos los bienes de Cortés, afirmando, que era muerto, y los depositaren en el Tenedor de bienes de Difuntos."—TORQUEMADA, *Monarquía Indiana*, lib. v. cap. 2.

It was during this expedition to Honduras, and while Cortes was at Guasualco, that a very remarkable incident took place, in which the great interpretess, Donna Marina, played the principal part.

Previously, however, to describing this incident, I must mention the fact that Donna Marina had been married to a Spanish cavalier, named Juan de Xaramillo. For once, Gomara, who was the chaplain of Cortes, scandalizes his master, for he says that Juan was drunk when he married, and that Cortes was blamed for having permitted the marriage. He also says that both husband and wife deserted Cortes.

The whole of this story is absolutely false. It probably was a portion of the history which the good Chaplain did not read out to his patron for correction.

It will perhaps be remembered by the reader how it was that Donna Marina came into the possession of Cortes. Her mother was the wife of the chief of Painala, a Mexican province. Her first husband died, and she then married a young man, by whom she had a son. The father and mother, being desirous of leaving their kingdom to the

boy (it is evident that there was no such thing as a salique law in Painala), resolved to get rid of Marina. They accordingly pretended that she had died; showed to the people the body of a girl of the same age, the daughter of one of their slaves; and by night gave poor Marina to some Indians of Xicalango. By them she was sold to the Tabascans; and they presented her, with nineteen other young women, to Cortes.

I shall now narrate the incident relating to Marina, which occurred in this expedition to Honduras. While Cortes was at Guasualco, he summoned all the neighbouring chiefs, in order to address to them a discourse upon religion. Among these chiefs came the wicked mother of Donna Marina, who had been baptized, and had taken the name of Martha. With her came the brother, by the mother's side, of Marina, who had also been baptized, and had taken the name of Lazarus. His father, the second husband of Martha, was dead. The daughter made herself known to her mother, and the mother could not but acknowledge her. The likeness between mother and daughter was very striking. Bernal Diaz, who had an *encomienda* of Indians in Guasualco, was acquainted with Marina's mother; and he testifies

to this great likeness. The wicked mother and the usurping son naturally thought that they had been sent for, in order to be slain, and that Marina would be reinstated in her principality. They began to weep and to lament; but, when Marina saw their grief, she consoled them, and bade them have no fear, for she told them that when they had made her over to the men of Xicalango they did not know what they were doing; and she forgave them. Also she gave them many jewels, and much fine linen, and bade them return to their own people. And then she said that "God had been very gracious to her, in making her abandon the worship of idols and become a Christian; also that it had been given to her to have a child by her lord and master Cortes, and to be married to a Spaniard of rank, such as was her husband Juan de Xaramillo. "If," she said, "they could have made her the Chieftainess of as many provinces as there were in Mexico, the only use that she could make of this power would be to do more service to her husband and to Cortes."

Bernal Diaz says, that in very certainty he heard all this, and he adds these words, "I swear to it, Amen."

Moreover it seems to him that the story is like that thing which happened in Egypt to Joseph, and those brethren of his, who came into his power when there was that famine in the land.*

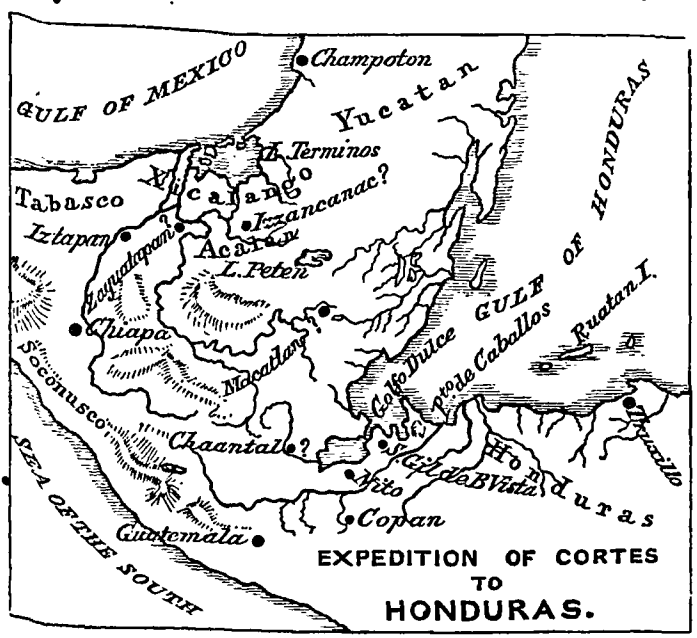
Returning to the affairs of Mexico, there is no doubt in my mind that there was a genuine belief that the expedition of Cortes to Honduras had been most disastrous. Ill news apparently does not require human feet to convey it, but has wings of its own. Though it was not true that Cortes and his Spanish companions had perished in their journey to Honduras, tidings might have come from the camp, which, if they had reached Mexico, would have justified the worst apprehensions as to the fate of Cortes. The difficulties of march and of transport—the severe privations arising from want of food and of fodder—and the sufferings of all kinds which Cortes and his army had to undergo, rendered lax the military disci-

Distress of the journey to Honduras.

* The singular brevity with which this good soldier writes is well illustrated by the four words "when that of the corn," (quando lo del trigo) which is his way of summing up the events which brought the brethren of Joseph into Egypt.

pline among them. Even the Commander himself at times found the greatest difficulty in appeasing his hunger. Then, too, the nature of the ground traversed was sometimes such as to defy

Difficulties of the march.



the maintenance of discipline. In the road, for instance, between Iztapan and Zaguatapan the Spaniards found themselves in a wood of such extent and thickness that, as Cortes expresses it, nothing was seen except the spot where they

placed their feet on the ground, and the aperture above them through which the heavens were discernible. Even when some of his men climbed the trees, their extent of vision was limited to a stone's throw.* The Indian guides were quite at fault, and the whole army would probably have perished, but for the use that was made of the mariner's compass. Such was the country, abounding in dense forests, wide morasses, broad, unfordable rivers,† and not without stony mountains, over which Cortes had to lead his motley band of Spanish horsemen, musicians, jugglers, and Mexican attendants.

* "Este monte era muy bravo y espantoso, por el cual anduve dos dias abriendo camino por donde señalaban aquellas guias, hasta tanto que dijeron que iban desatinados, que no sabian á donde iban; y era la montaña de tal calidad que no se via otra cosa sino donde poniamos los piés en el suelo, ó mirando arriba, la claridad del cielo: tanta era la espesura y alteza de los árboles, que aunque se subian en algunos, no podian descubrir un tiro de piedra."—*Documentos Inéditos*, tom. iv. p. 34.

† The bridges that were thrown over these formidable marshes and rivers, which chiefly owed their construction to the skill of the Mexican artificers, remained for years; and when these provinces were at peace, the admiring traveller was wont to exclaim, "These are the bridges of Cortes."—Bernal Diaz, cap. 178.

To estimate the intense sufferings which the generals as well as the common soldiers underwent in this expedition to Honduras, recourse must be had to the pages of the narrative of the common soldier who took part in it, and who dwells upon details which are not mentioned by his chief. Bernal Diaz, when describing the construction of a certain bridge across a river, says that the army had nothing to eat for three days but grass, and a root called *quecuenque*, which burnt their lips and tongues. No crusader cursed with more depth of bitterness the hermit, or the baron, or the prince, who had induced or compelled him to enter upon his foolish crusade, than did the soldiers of Cortes curse their unfortunate commander. His own immediate attendants died first; his buffoon, a courtly officer so dear to a man of melancholy nature such as Cortes, was one of the earliest that perished from fatigue and hunger. Then the musicians fell ill, the players upon the sackbut, the clarion, and the dulcimer. One vigorous musician, however, continued to play upon his instrument; but the soldiers would not listen to him, for they said that it was like the howling of jackals; and that what they

Sufferings from hunger of the Expedition.

wanted was maize to eat, and not music to listen to.

In the hope that some friendly aid might come after them, the soldiers cut crosses on the gigantic Ceyba trees, and fastened bits of paper, with this inscription, "Cortes passed this way on such and such a day."

The Mexican chiefs became cannibals. They seized upon the natives where they could find them, and, baking their bodies between heated stones, devoured them. This abominable practice was immediately put a stop to by Cortes, when the fact came to his knowledge.

Bernal Diaz was sent out as the captain of a foraging party. He was fortunate enough to bring back one hundred and thirty loads of maize, eighty fowls, some honey, and some beans. But as he returned to the camp at evening, the soldiers intercepted his convoy and devoured all the provisions, crying out, as they carried off the provision, "This is for Cortes." It was in vain that the officers of the General's household endeavoured to secure some of this food for their master: the common soldiers exclaimed, "You and Cortes had swine for yourselves; and you saw us dying of hunger, and you gave us nothing."

Cortes was enraged when he heard of these things, and blamed Bernal Diaz, who replied that Cortes ought to have sent out guards to protect the convoy. Then Cortes resorted to flattery and persuasion instead of reprimand, and said, "Oh, Señor brother Bernal Diaz del Castello, if you have left any of the food secreted by the road, for the love of me, give me some of it. I am sure you must have kept some for yourself and your friend Sandoval." And then Sandoval, who was with Cortes, said, "I swear I have not even a handful of maize to roast for my supper." In reply, Bernal Diaz admitted that, in a neighbouring village, the inhabitants had secreted for him some maize, and some fowls, and some honey; and he proposed that "at the fourth hour of the second sleep," when the whole camp would be buried in repose, they should go and get these provisions. Then Sandoval's heart was joyful, and he embraced Bernal Diaz; but Cortes, whose duty to religion was never far from his mind, asked if the monks, who had accompanied the expedition, had anything to eat. To which Bernal Diaz replied, that God took greater care of them than he (Cortes) did, for all the soldiers gave to them

part of what they had seized upon this evening, and the monks would not die of hunger.

It is very significant of the state of misery and insubordination which prevailed in the camp, that Sandoval went himself with Bernal Diaz, in the fourth hour of the second sleep, to get his share of these provisions; for, of the many soldiers who were especially attached to his command, there was not one who could be trusted to bring back food to his starving commander.

It was not likely that the prisoners of Cortes —including the captive monarchs of Mexico, Tlacuba and Tezcuco—could fail to observe the inevitable relaxation of discipline which was caused by the sufferings of the army, and to commune with themselves and with each other upon the advantage they might derive from it. They accordingly conspired. Their plan was, after destroying those Spaniards who were with them, to raise the standard of revolt, and march for Mexico. The time was very favourable for their design. Part of the Spanish troops were with Pedro de Alvarado in Guatemala; another part in Honduras with Christoval de Olid, and with the Captains who had gone to subdue that rebel. Other Spaniards,

The Mexican chiefs conspire.

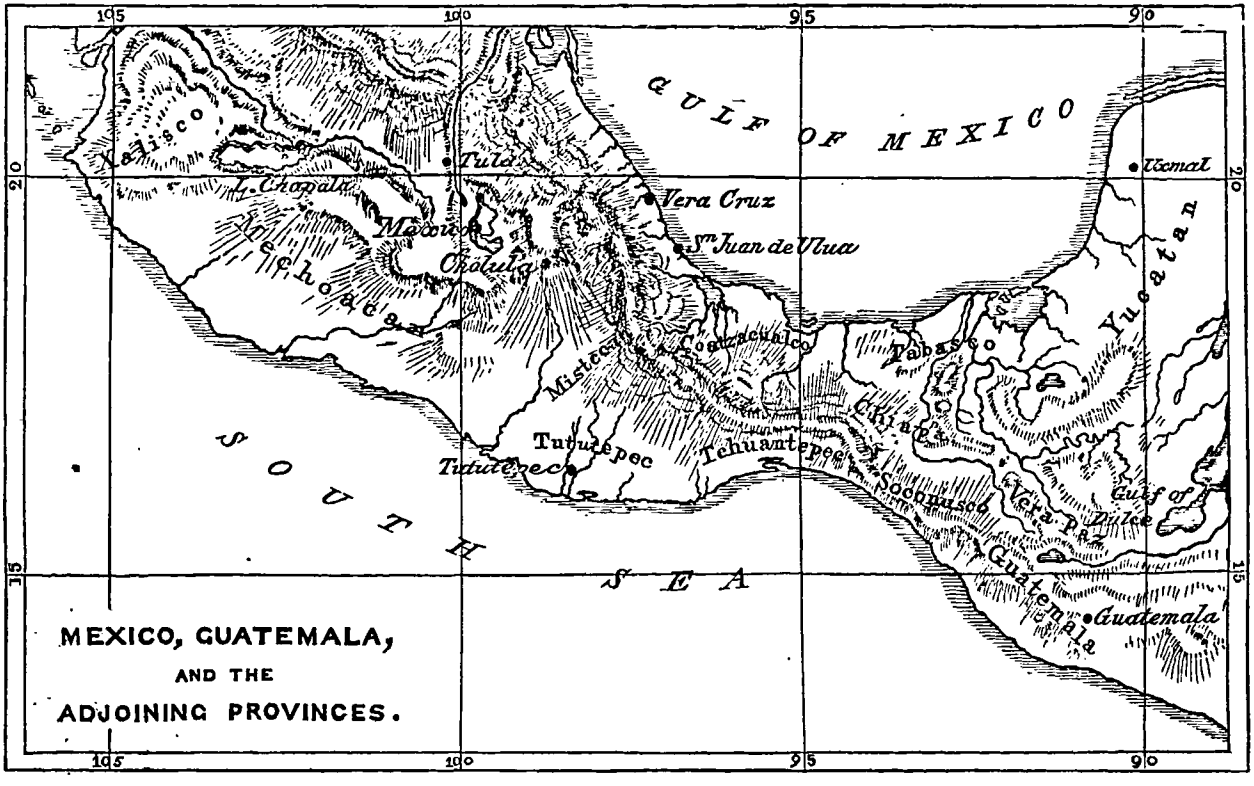
again, had gone into the province of Mechoacan, where some gold mines, according to report, had been discovered. Mexico itself was comparatively defenceless; and at no period since the conquest would a revolt have been more formidable. The Mexican troops who accompanied Cortes amounted to three thousand. Death was imminent from starvation: why should they not die to save their monarch and to reinstate their country in its former greatness?

Absence of Spanish troops from Mexico.

The conspiracy was betrayed to Cortes by Mexicatzincatl, the same man whom Cortes had set over the work of constructing and governing the Indian quarters of Mexico. This man probably understood better than his countrymen the solid basis upon which the power of Cortes rested, and the speed with which a common danger would compel the Spaniards to resume their accustomed wariness and discipline. The traitor showed to Cortes a paper whereon were painted the faces and names of the Mexican Lords and Princes who were concerned in the conspiracy. The Spanish Commander immediately seized upon them separately, and examined them one by one, telling each that the others had confessed the truth.

Conspiracy betrayed to Cortes.

Cortes seizes the conspirators.



MEXICO, GUATEMALA,
AND THE
ADJOINING PROVINCES.

According to Bernal Diaz, and also according to an ancient Tezcucan history,* it appears as if the King of Mexico did not confess to more than being aware of the conspiracy, and declared that he had refused to entertain it. This may be dubious; but, at any rate, the cruel practical wisdom of Cortes would make but little difference between a conspiracy suggested by the monarch himself or by others on his behalf. The result would have been the same. Indeed, Cortes maintained that merely to have listened to this treason was a thing deserving of death.† And Cortes saw that the sure way of putting an immediate stop to such conspiracies was to make a great example of the principal personages concerned. Accordingly, the Kings of Mexico and Tlacuba were condemned to death.

When led to execution, the King of Mexico exclaimed, "O, Malinché, I have long known the falseness of your words, and have foreseen that you would give me that death which,

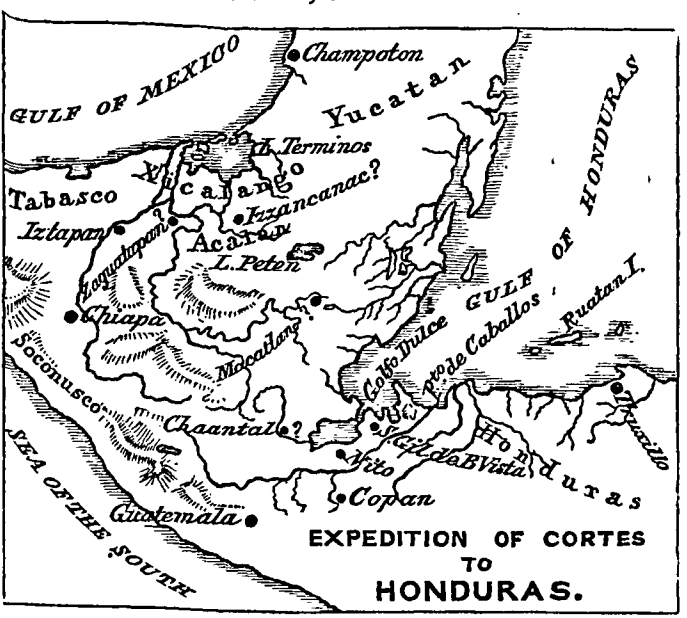
Speech of Quatemotzin.

* Referred to by Torquemada.

† Los otros solte porque no parecía que tenian mas culpa que de haberlo oido, aunque aquello bastaba para merecer la muerte.

alas! I did not give myself, when I surrendered to you in my city of Mexico. Wherefore do you slay me without justice? May God demand it of you."

The King of Tlacuba said that he looked upon his death as welcome, since he was to die with



The Kings of Mexico and Tlacuba put to death. 1525.

his Lord, the King of Mexico. After confession and absolution, the two Kings were hanged upon a ceyba tree in Izzancanac, in the province of Acalán, on one of the carnival days before Shrovetide, in the year 1525. Thus ended the great

Mexican dynasty—itself a thing compacted by so much blood and toil and suffering of countless human beings. The days of deposed monarchs—victims alike to the zeal of their friends and the suspicions of their captors—are mostly very brief; and perhaps it is surprising that the King of Mexico should have survived so long as four years the conquest of his capital, and have been treated during the greater part of that time with favour and honour.

Some writers have supposed that Cortes was weary of his captives, and wished to destroy them, and that the charge of conspiracy was fictitious. Such assertions betray a total ignorance of the character of this great Spaniard. Astute men seldom condescend to lying. Now, Cortes was not only very astute, but, according to his notions, highly honourable. A genuine hidalgo, and a thoroughly loyal man, he would as soon have thought of committing a small theft as of uttering a falsehood in a despatch addressed to his sovereign.*

---

* Indeed, in a letter to the Emperor he says that at no time, and for no interest would he tell a lie to

Cortes could well afford to be satisfied with the deaths of the two principal kings, and to spare the other conspirators, as his discovery of this conspiracy deepened the impression which the Mexicans already entertained of his supernatural knowledge. They had seen him, when most perplexed with the difficulties and dangers of the journey, call for a mysterious-looking mirror or chart, and after watching with solicitude the trembling movements of a needle suspended over the flat surface, determine at once upon his line of march, and never suffer the direction to be varied until they came out upon the very town which had been the object of the march. When, as they thought, the Spanish Commander discovered this conspiracy (for, doubtless, the faithless Mexican kept his own counsel, or he would have been torn to pieces by his countrymen), what could they imagine but that he had been conversing with that mysterious little rod of iron, whose tremblings had again revealed to its master

Faith amongst the Mexicans in the supernatural knowledge of Cortes.

His Majesty ("nunca Dios quiera que yo á V. M. diga mentira en ningun tiempo ni por ningun interese)."— *Coleccion de Documentos para la Historia de Mexico*, por Joaquin Garcia Icazbalceta. Tom. i. Mexico, 1858.

the course to be taken in the midst of the dangers that surrounded him? Cortes was not the man to omit any opportunity of impressing others with a sense of his power. The belief of the attendant Mexicans in the knowledge that was thus magically conveyed to the Spanish Commander grew to such a height, that some of them, whose consciences must have been quite clear of this conspiracy, begged him to look in the mirror and the chart, and see there whether they were not loyal towards him.*

This has been construed as an instance of the "simplicity" of the Mexicans; but it may be

* "Porque como han visto que para acertar aquel camino, muchas veces sacaba una carta de marear y un aguja, en especial cuando se acertó el camino de Calgoatrepan, han dicho á muchos españoles que por allí lo saqué, y aun á mí me han dicho algunos de ellos queriéndome hacer cierto que me tienen buena voluntad, que para que viese sus buenas intenciones, que me rogaban mucho que mirase el espejo y la carta, y allí veria como ellos me tenian buena voluntad, pues por allí sabia todas las otras cosas. E yo tambien les hice entender que ansí era la verdad, é que en aquella aguja é carta de marear via yo é sabia é se me descubrian todas las cosas."—*Relacion al* EMPERADOR *por* HERNAN CORTES. *Documentos Inéditos*, tom. iv. p. 55.

doubted whether there are not many amongst ourselves who would be very much puzzled to explain the phenomenon which perplexed and awed the Mexican troops. And it must be remembered that the knowledge which had been possessed by their priests, and stored up in their colleges, had, for the most part, been taken from them. If, in these times, a nation were suddenly deprived of its chief men in science and art, it would probably astound the world to see how soon the great body of that nation would degenerate into utter ignorance and superstition. The principal knowledge possessed by mankind is, even now, confined to a very few, comparatively speaking; and in those days, when the few were a favoured caste, and the Government was entirely aristocratic or despotic, the loss of the nobles, the priests, and the kings, was absolutely the destruction of the nation, as a nation. The Indian, who is now in such a state of stolidity that no reward, hardly, can induce him to stir from the squatting position that he has once taken up before the fire, is the lineal descendant, perhaps, of a man who projected, or helped to carry out, with cunning workmanship, constructions which are still a

How a nation might degenerate.

Knowledge confined to a few.

marvel to the most intelligent persons of the most civilized nations in the world.* The destructibility of such civilization as the Assyrian, Egyptian, Mexican, or Peruvian, and perhaps of

* Ulloa, who travelled in Peru in the year 1736, says—"The disproportion between what I read and what I am going to relate, is so remarkable, that, on a retrospect towards past times, I am utterly at a loss to account for the universal change of things; especially when surrounded by such visible monuments of the industry, polity, and laws of the Indians of Peru, that it would be madness to question the truth of the accounts that have been given of them; for the ruins of these ancient works are still amazing. On the other hand, I can hardly credit my own eyes, when I behold that nation involved as it were in Cimmerian darkness—rude, indocile, and living in a barbarism little better than those who have their dwelling among the wastes, precipices, and forests. But what is still more difficult to conceive is, how these people, whose former wisdom is conspicuous in the equity of their laws, and the establishment of a government so singular as that under which they live, should at present show no traces of that genius and capacity which formed so excellent an œconomy, and so beautiful a system of social duties: though undoubtedly they are the same people, and still retain some of their ancient customs and manners."—Don George Juan, and Don Antonio de Ulloa. *Voyage to South America*, translated by J. Adams, vol. i. pp. 401, 404. London, 1806.

others as notable, whose names even have been lost, or exist only in symbols that may never be interpreted, is not merely a marked fact in the world's annals, but one which especially requires to be kept in mind throughout this narrative, in order to prevent us from falling into the delusion of supposing that the great works and remarkable polities we read of in the Mexican Empire are mythical or fabulous, while in truth they are quite within the domain of modern history, and rest upon similar testimony to that upon which we give credit to the annals of our own Henry the Eighth and Queen Elizabeth. The fathers of Bacon and Shakespeare were almost contemporaries of Montezuma.

The last of the Mexican monarchs being disposed of by this severe, but, as it seemed to Cortes, necessary execution, our natural sympathy with the vanquished makes us glad to find that the army murmured at these things, and that there were some of the Spanish soldiers who thought the execution unjust. Bernal Diaz notes that Cortes was melancholy, depressed, and sleepless.* It is

Depression of Cortes after execution of Mexican kings.

* "Tambien quiero dezir, que como Cortés andava mal dispuesto, y aun mui pensativo y descontento del trabajoso camino que llevavamos, é como avia mandado

some satisfaction to imagine that bloody deeds, even such as have but the lesser stain of policy, render thick and heavy and phantomful the air around the beds of those who, to avoid the memories of such deeds, need the forgetfulness of sleep far more than other men.

Before Cortes started from Espíritu Santo, he sent to the Lords of Tabasco and Xicalango, desiring that they would come to him, or send persons with whom he could confer. The caciques sent such persons, who, in reply to the inquiries of Cortes, informed him that on the sea-coast, beyond the country that is called Yucatan, there were certain Spaniards who did the people of that country much harm, burning towns, and slaying

---

ahorcar á Guatemuz, é su primo el señor de Tacuba, sin tener justicia para ello, é avia cada dia hambre, é que adolescian Españoles, é morian muchos Mexicanos, pareció ser que de noche no reposava de pensar en ello, y saliesse de la cama donde dormia á passear en una sala, adonde avia ídolos, que era aposento principal de aquel puebleçuelo, adonde tenian otros ídolos, y descuidóse y cayó mas de dos estados abaxo, y se descalabró la cabeça, y calló que no dixo cosa buena ni mala sobre ello, salvo curarse la descalabradura, y todo se lo passava y sufria." —BERNAL DIAZ, cap. 177.

the inhabitants, by which the merchants of Tabasco and Xicalango (some of them probably being the persons then speaking) had lost all commerce with that coast. "And as eye-witnesses," Cortes says, "they gave an account of all the towns on the coast, until you come to the country where Pedrarias de Avila, your Majesty's Governor, is, and they made me a map upon a cloth of the whole of it."*

Two centres of conquest, Darien and Mexico.

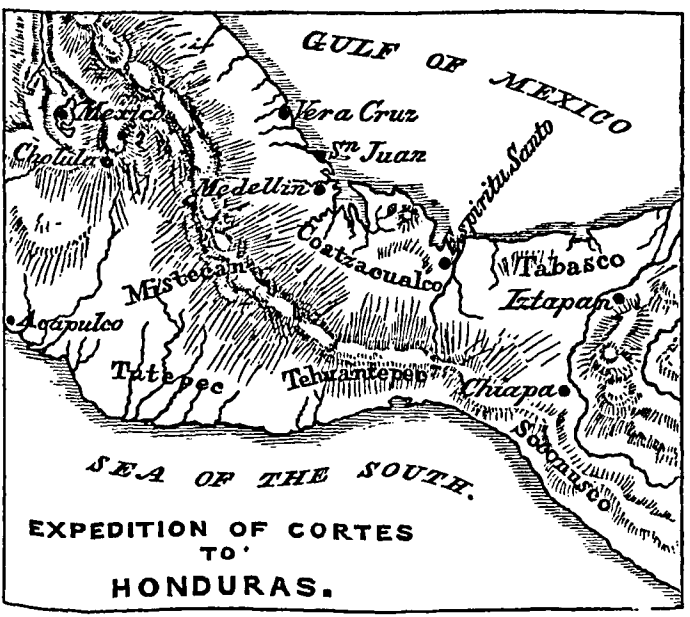
The allusion in the above words of Cortes to Pedrarias de Avila may remind us that the radiations from these two great centres of conquest and discovery in America, namely, Darien and Mexico, were about to intersect. After a short time the Darienites will go southwards to Peru, and the Mexican conquerors northwards to California.

The daily movements of the march of Cortes cannot be recorded in a brief biography. But,

---

* "Y como testigos de vista me dieron razon de casi todos los pueblos de la costa hasta llegar donde está Pedrarias de Avila, gobernador de V. M., y me hicieron una figura en un paño de toda ella."—*Documentos Inéditos*, tom. vi. p. 11.

if we would appreciate justly the nature and resources of New Spain, we must observe that the territories traversed by Cortes possessed signs of a civilization not far inferior to that of the Mexicans.



He speaks of Iztapan as "a very great thing." He mentions its pastures, its lands for agriculture, and its being surrounded by a considerable extent of settled territory.* Of Acalán, the province in

Signs of civilization which Cortes meets with on his route.

* "Este pueblo de Iztapan es muy grande cosa y está

which the Mexican Kings were hanged, he says also that this was "a very great thing," where there are many towns and much people, and that it abounded in provisions, amongst which he specifies honey. He also speaks of the merchants of that country.* Further on, in Macatlan, he comes upon a fortress, of which he thinks it worth while to give a minute account to the Emperor, describing its battlements, embrasures, traverses and turrets, "showing such good order and arrangement, that it could not be better, he says, considering the arms with which they fought."

Fortress at Macatlan.

Temples at Chaantal.

At Chaantal he found temples built after the fashion of the Mexicans; and we now know what remarkable buildings he might have seen, had his route diverged but a few miles from that which was taken, for he passed near the great city of

Cortes passed near Copan.

asentado en la ribera de un muy hermoso rio: tiene muy buen asiento para poblar en él españoles: tiene muy hermosa ribera donde hay buenos pastos: tiene muy buenas tierras de labranzas: tiene buena comarca de tierra poblada."—*Relacion al* EMPERADOR; *Documentos Inéditos*, tom. iv. p. 31.

* "Hay en ella muchos mercaderes y gentes que tratan en muchas partes, y son ricos de esclavos y de las cosas que se tratan en la tierra."—*Documentos Inéditos* tom, iv. p. 55.

Copan,* the monuments of which remain to this day to astound the traveller and perplex the antiquarian.

End of Christoval de Olid. 1524.

It was not until Cortes approached the sea-coast, that he heard that Christoval de Olid had been assassinated by Francisco de Las Casas, the captain who had been sent to subdue the rebel. The first object of the expedition was, therefore, in great measure attained. Cortes, however, proceeded to visit the new settlement. Indeed, it would have been useless for him to attempt to

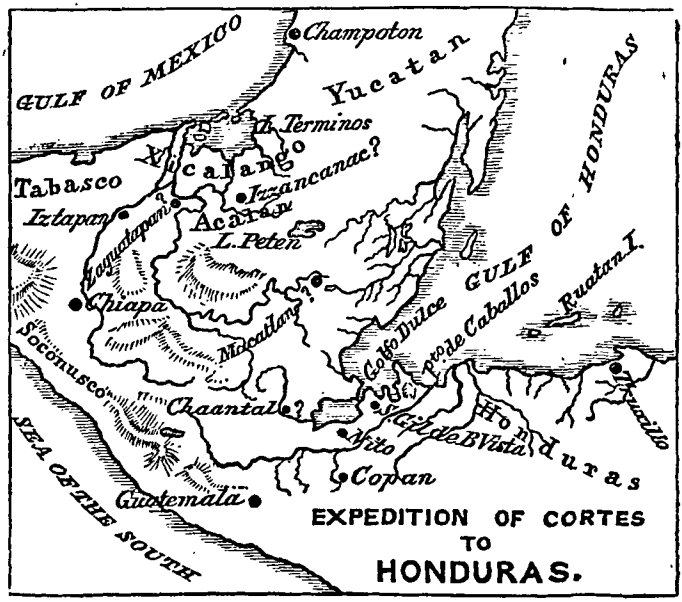
Cortes proceeds to Truxillo. 1525.

---

* "As to Copan, I shall not at present offer any conjecture in regard to the antiquity of these buildings, merely remarking that at ten leagues' distance is a village called Las Tres Cruces, or the Three Crosses, from three crosses, which, according to tradition, Cortes erected at that place when on his conquering march from Mexico to Honduras by the Lake of Peten. Cortes, then, must have passed within twenty or thirty miles of the place now called Palenque. If it had been a living city, its fame must have reached his ears, and he would probably have turned aside from his road to subdue and plunder it. It seems, therefore, but reasonable to suppose that it was at that time desolate and in ruins, and even the memory of it lost."—STEPHENS, *Incidents of Travel in Central America*, vol. ii. chap. xx. p. 357.

return by the way he had come: and it was while he was staying in Truxillo, and busying himself with his colony there, that intelligence reached him of the lamentable proceedings which had taken place in Mexico during his absence.

Bad news from Mexico.



He had come all this way to punish the rebellion of one of his captains, and had left behind him the seeds of a most deplorable sedition which was to break forth in his chief city. In commenting upon this state of things to his mas-

ter, the Emperor, he uses a very striking expression, condemnatory of the folly and unfaithfulness which was manifested for the most part by those official persons in the colonies who were entrusted with delegated authority. "They think," he says, "that unless they make themselves ridiculous, they hardly seem to themselves to be in power"—(*literally*, "unless they commit folly, they think they do not wear the plume"*), a proverbial expression which probably came from the East, and which embodies the deep sense of misgovernment that had been felt by subject millions whose only protest against the folly and caprice of their rulers was some dire proverb of this kind.

The conduct of Cortes on this occasion gives great insight into his character. He was much urged by his followers to go at once by sea to Mexico. His presence there was greatly needed. No one was more aware of this than he was himself. Still, he hesitated to go; for it was a marked peculiarity of this great man, that his attention was not always directed to what seemed most

---

* "Que sino hacen befa no portan penacho."—*Doc. Inéd.* tom. iv. p. 131.

The large views of Cortes.

pressing, but often to some duty based upon general rules of action, and a large foresight of what would in the end be politic. His conduct at the siege of Mexico, in sending to succour the Indian allies, when he himself had just suffered defeat, was an instance of this largeness of view. And, on the present occasion, the state of the King's affairs in Honduras, and the opportunity for enlarging the conquest there formed powerful attractions to keep him in the spot where he then was. In this perplexity he sought inspiration from above; and, after solemn prayers and processions, the course of returning to Mexico seemed to him the better way.* Accordingly, arranging his affairs in Honduras, he prepared to set sail for New Spain. Thrice, however, he was compelled to return to land: once on account of a sudden calm, and also from hearing that the people he had

Cortes sets sail for New Spain.

* "Y estando en esta perplejidad consideré que ninguna cosa puede ser bien hecha ni guiada sino es por mano del Hacedor y Movedor de todas, y hice decir misas y hacer procesiones y otros sacrificios suplicando á Dios me encaminase en aquello de que él mas se sirviese, y despues de hecho esto por algunos dias parecióme que todavía debia posponer todas las cosas y ir á remediar aquellos daños."—*Doc. Inéd.* tom. iv. p. 131.

left on shore were inclined to be seditious: a second time, because the main-yard (*la entena mayor*) snapped asunder: and the third time, because of a violent north wind which drove his vessel back after he had made fifty leagues from the coast.* Thinking that these were signs that God did not approve of the course he had adopted, Cortes again sought for divine guidance; and this

Is thrice driven back.

---

* This would have been the time for Cortes to have consulted the stars, but his clear and pious mind abjured all such vain attempts at knowledge; and amidst his numerous retinue no such attendant as an astrologer was to be found. He believed profoundly in the immediate action of a superintending Providence, but was not likely to seek for hope or guidance from any created things. It is remarkable that the science, if it may so be called, of astrology, which had great hold upon shrewd persons, such as Louis the Eleventh, Pope Paul the Third, Catherine de Medicis, Wallenstein, the Earl of Leicester, and many other historical personages, both in that age and in those which preceded and followed it, had no influence whatever upon the Spanish monarchs —Ferdinand, Charles the Fifth, and Philip the Second. Nor does astrology seem to have had any hold upon the minor personages connected with the conquest of America. The hard, distinct faith of the Spaniard, and perhaps his hatred of the Moor, made him averse from wizardry, or anything that resembled it.

Resolves then to stay in Honduras.

time, after renewed prayers and processions, he resolved to stay where he was, and to despatch a trusty messenger to his followers in Mexico, telling them that he was alive, and informing them of what had happened to him. They had fled for refuge to the Franciscan convent in that city. On hearing this good news they took heart, sallied forth, and deposed the Factor and the Veedor.

Fresh intelligence from Mexico.

Meanwhile, the vessel in which Cortes had sent his messenger returned to him at Truxillo; and in it came a cousin of his, a Franciscan friar, named Diego Altamirano. From this monk, and from the letters which he brought, Cortes learned to the full extent the scandals and the tumults which had taken place during his absence in Mexico, and the necessity there seemed to be for his immediate return to the seat of his government. He had intended to return by Nicaragua and Guatemala, being well aware of the disastrous state of those provinces, and of the services which his presence might render. But the troubles of Mexico summoned him with a louder voice, and he resolved to return forthwith to that city. Accordingly, on the 25th of April, 1526, he set

Cortes resolves to return to Mexico, April, 1526.

sail for New Spain. A violent storm drove him out of his way to Cuba, and he landed at the port of Havannah, where in a few days he learned that his party had been successful, and had deposed the Factor and the Veedor. On the 16th of May he set sail again for New Spain, landed near the town of Medellin, and made a triumphant entry into Mexico on the 19th of June 1526, amidst the acclamations of his own people and of the natives. Cortes was much changed. There were many persons who failed at first to recognise in his haggard, sickly countenance, imprinted with the sufferings and dangers he had undergone during his journey to Honduras, and in his subsequent voyage, the brilliant and handsome Cortes, who, only twenty months before, had marched out of the city at the head of a gallant company,—himself the chief attraction, both by the gifts of nature and of fortune, for the admiring gaze of the multitude. On entering Mexico, Cortes went forthwith to the Franciscan monastery to give thanks to God, and to confess his sins.* He stayed there six days; and

Cortes returns to Mexico, June, 1526.

* "Y allí estuve seis dias con los frailes hasta dar cuenta á Dios de mis culpas."—*Doc. Inéd.* tom. iv. p. 147.

when he quitted the monastery, he no longer enjoyed the supreme power in New Spain. Indeed, two days before taking leave of the friars, a messenger arrived from Medellin, informing him that certain vessels had come from Spain, and the report was that a Judge had come in one of them. The report proved to be true, and the Judge was the Licentiate Luis Ponce de Leon, who had been appointed by Charles the Fifth, in November, 1525, to take a *residencia* of Cortes.*

Cortes was not aware at first of the powers of Ponce de Leon; and we may fully believe him, when he declares that he was glad of the news of this Judge's arrival, as it would save him from proceeding to arraign the Factor and the Veedor, in which cause, as he was the person principally injured, he would be accused of a passionate bias in his own favour, "which is the thing," he says, "that I most abhor."†

---

* See "Carta de Carlos V. á Hernan Cortes avisándole que habia mandado tomarle Residencia."—*Doc. Inéd.* tom. i. p. 101.

† "Me parecia que cualquier cosa que en ello proveyese, podria ser juzgado por los malos á pasion, que es la cosa que yo mas aborrezco."—*Doc. Inéd.* tom. iv. p. 147.

The day after the arrival of the messenger from Medellin, when Cortes had come from the monastery to attend a bull-fight, on the festival of San Juan, there were brought to him two despatches, one being the King's letter of credentials, informing him that Ponce de Leon was appointed to take a *residencia* of him, and the other from Ponce de Leon himself, telling Cortes that he was hastening to Mexico. Cortes, though anxious and alert to receive the King's Justiciary with all reverence and submission, could hardly prepare to meet the Judge with due pomp, before he entered the city on the 2nd of July, 1526.

June 24 (Nativity of St. John the Baptist).

Ponce de Leon comes, July 2nd, 1526.

The next morning it was arranged that the wands of office should be given up. So, after hearing mass, Ponce de Leon, in presence of the people, and of the authorities, produced his powers, received the wands of the Alcaldes and the Alguazils, and immediately returned them,—all but one, which was that of Cortes, for Ponce de Leon, taking that himself, said with much courtesy, "This of my Lord Governor I must have myself."

The government is taken from Cortes.

The official persons, and Cortes among the

rest, kissed the royal orders, and declared their readiness to obey them.

The dutiful obedience to Cortes to his King is rendered more manifest when we come to know* that Fray Tomas Ortiz, the head of the Dominicans who accompanied Ponce de Leon, and entered Mexico with him, went immediately to Cortes, and informed him that the Judge had authority from the Emperor to behead him and to confiscate all his goods. The friar suggested resistance, but Cortes was far too wise and too faithful to take the advice.

Testimony of Father Motolinia.

Before narrating what took place at the *residencia* of Cortes, we may discern from the testimony† of an eye-witness, Father Motolinia, who was greatly honoured by his contemporaries, and

---

* "Me certificó que Luis Ponce traia provision de V. M. para me prender, é degollar é tomar todos mis bienes, é que lo sabia de muy cierta ciencia como persona que venia de la corte."—See Letter addressed by Cortes to the Bishop of Osma.—*Doc. Inéd.* tom. i. p. 28.

† In the library of Sir Thomas Phillipps, Bart., of Middle Hill, is an original manuscript letter from Fray Toribio Motolinia de Paredes, to Don Antonio Pimentel Conde de Benavente, dated "Dia de San Matia," (February 24) 1541.

trusted, as we have seen, by Cortes himself, at what expense of life and suffering the new order of things was brought about in Mexico.

This excellent monk gives an account of what he considers to have been the ten "plagues" of New Spain. 1. The small-pox. 2. The slaughter during the conquest. 3. A great famine which took place immediately after the capture of the city. 4. The Indian and negro overseers (*la quarta plaga fue de los calpixques . . . y negros*). 5. The excessive tributes and services demanded from the Indians. 6. The gold mines. 7. The rebuilding of Mexico. 8. The making of slaves, in order to work them in the mines. 9. The transport service for the mines. 10. The dissensions amongst the Spaniards themselves.

The "ten plagues" of New Spain.

Motolinia's description of the rebuilding of Mexico is both minute and vivid. He says, that though the streets were very wide, the work was so busily carried on, that a man could scarcely make his way through them.* He describes the loss of

* "Apenas podia hombre romper por algunas calles y calçadas, aunque son muy anchas."—*Carta de Fray* MOTOLINIA. MS.

life among the Indians from accidents caused by the demolition of old buildings, and the construction of new ones. He says, that not only had they to seek the materials for building, but also to provide the food, and pay the workmen.* He confirms the statement before made, that the work was done by sheer force of human labour; and that a stone, or beam of wood, which should have taken a hundred men only, was dragged by four hundred.† Such was the fervour, he adds, with which the work was carried on, that the songs and shouts of the workmen did not cease day or night during the first years of the rebuilding of Mexico.‡

The rebuilding of Mexico.

When we consider these "plagues", we may fairly maintain, that a conquered people have seldom been more hardly dealt with by the diseases

* "A su costa buscan los materiales, y pagan los pedreros y carpinteros, y si ellos mesmos no traen que comer, ayunan."—*Carta de Fray* MOTOLINIA. MS.

† "La piedra ó viga que avia menester çien ombres trayan la quatrocientos."—*Ut supra.*

‡ "Tienen de costumbre de yr cantando y dando vozes, y los cantos y vozes apenas çessavan de noche ni de dia por el gran hervor que trayan en la hedificacion del pueblo los primeros años."—*Ut supra.*

and the vices of their conquerors. It was also a surplusage of misery that the conquered territory should be rich in mines, and that the conquerors should have brought with them slaves of another race.

CHAPTER XVIII.

The Residencia of Cortes—Death of Ponce de Leon—Confused state of the Government of Mexico—Ponce de Leon's instructions about encomiendas come to naught—Encomiendas allowed by the Spanish Court—An audiencia created for Mexico—Instructions to this Audiencia do not vary the nature of encomiendas in New Spain.

THE *residencia* of Cortes was commenced; and during the whole time that it lasted (namely, seventeen days), not a single charge was brought against him.* In his fifth letter to the Emperor, he successfully repels the accusations made against him by "serpent

The reply of Cortes to the accusations made against him.

* "Y luego fué pregonado públicamente en la plaza de esta ciudad mi residencia, y estuve en ella diez y siete dias sin que se me pusiese demanda alguna."—*Documentos Inéditos*, tom. iv. p. 150.

tongues," with regard to his wealth and possessions, asserting that, if he has received much, he has spent much more,—and that too, not in buying heritages for himself, but in extending the patrimony of the King. He declares, that at the present moment, he is poor, and much indebted.* Indeed, he makes the following curious offer to the King. His Majesty had been informed that Cortes possessed two hundred *cuentos* of rent, upon which Cortes offers to His Majesty to commute all that he has for twenty *cuentos* of rent in New Spain, or ten in the mother country.

The *residencia* of Cortes, however, was broken

* "Y cuanto á lo que dicen de tener yo mucha parte de la tierra, así lo confieso, y que he habido harta suma y cantidad de oro; pero digo que no ha sido tanta que haya bastado para que yo deje de ser pobre y estar adeudado en mas de cincuenta mil pesos de oro sin tener un castellano de que pagarlo, porque si mucho he habido, muy mucho mas he gastado, y no en comprar mayorazgos ni otras rentas para mí, sino en dilatar por estas partes el señorío y patrimonio Real de V. A. conquistando con ello y con poner mi persona á muchos trabajos, riesgos y peligros, muchos reinos y señoríos para Vuestra Excelencia, los cuales no podrán encubrir los malos con sus serpentinas lenguas."—*Documentos Inéditos*, tom. iv. p. 154.

off by an unexpected event. Ponce de Leon had been ill before this formal ceremony of taking the wands of justice: he returned to his apartments, shivering, and unable to eat. He threw himself on his bed, from which he was never to rise. The fever increased: in a few days it was evident that he was about to die; and summoning to his bedside the King's civil servants, in their presence he delivered his wand of office to Marcos de Aguilar, and soon after expired. In those days eminent persons seldom died suddenly without the suspicion arising of their having been assisted out of the world; and, as Ponce de Leon's death, at this juncture, was apparently convenient for Cortes, there were not wanting people who probably believed, and loudly asserted, that the new Governor had been poisoned by the man he came to supersede. This accusation, no doubt, travelled, with all the swiftness of malignity, to the Spanish Court.

Ponce de Leon dies. 1526.

Calumny, which can not only make a cloud seem like a mountain, but can almost transform a cloud into a mountain, was often busy with the name of Cortes. This is the third time — I almost scorn to mention it—that he was accused

of poisoning persons whose existence was supposed to be inconvenient to him.*

Meanwhile, in Mexico, it was immediately a subject of discussion, as might have been foreseen, whether Ponce de Leon could delegate the power he had received from the Emperor. That question, after many juntas (for the disputed point is a difficult one), was determined in favour of Marcos de Aguilar, who was accordingly accepted as the Governor. There is always, however, a loss of power in these transmissions of authority. The loss was not of much importance in the present case, for Marcos de Aguilar was a sickly man, and the charge of such a difficult government so rapidly augmented his malady, that he died about two months after his appointment. Again Cortes seemed to be delivered, by a happy accident, from the troubles of his *residencia*. Before his death, Marcos de Aguilar had, in his turn, taken care to nominate a successor, and had chosen the Treasurer, Alonzo de Estrada. The question respecting the delegation of authority was renewed,

Marcos de Aguilar succeeds Ponce de Leon.

He dies.

* Francisco de Garay, and Catharine de Xuarez, the first wife of Cortes, were said to have been poisoned by him. These reports were utterly without foundation.

and much disputed over. The result, too, was different, for it was at last agreed upon that Estrada should govern, but in concert with Gonzalo de Sandoval, and that Cortes should have charge of the government of the Indians, and of the war department. Indeed, it appears as if the main body of the civil servants of Mexico wished that Cortes should resume the whole power which he had held before the arrival of Ponce de Leon, until the Emperor should decide what was to be done. But Cortes very prudently refused, saying, that "his fidelity and singleness of purpose would thus be more clearly manifested." This was the more self-denying on the part of Cortes, as it is probable, from what afterwards occurred, that he knew he should find no friend in Alonzo de Estrada, although this was the same man in whom Cortes had placed such confidence, and whom he had left in authority when he undertook the journey to Honduras.

The Treasurer and Sandoval succeed Marcos de Aguilar.

Alonzo de Estrada had not been long in office before a matter of dispute, originally trifling, arose, which carried the enmity of the Governor and Cortes to a great height. An inhabitant of Mexico, named Diego de Figueroa, had a violent

Dispute between Estrada and Cortes.

quarrel with Christoval Cortejo, a servant of Sandoval, and therefore a dependant of Cortes. From words they proceeded to blows, and Figueroa was wounded. Estrada, with the utmost rashness, listening only to one side, and pronouncing sentence within an hour after the affair had occurred, ordered Cortejo's left hand to be cut off, and, after it had been cut off, sent him to prison, in order to enforce his departure from Mexico the next day, a punishment which the furious Governor resolved to inflict, in addition to the mutilation that the poor man had already suffered. Not satisfied with this, Estrada, fearing that Cortes would not bear quietly such treatment of a follower, sent a notification to Cortes himself that he should quit Mexico, and, under penalty of his life, should not venture to contravene this order. The whole city was inflamed with rage at the conduct of the Governor, and the inhabitants rushed to place themselves at the disposal of Cortes, threatening open rebellion; but Cortes, ever cautious, only hastened the more to depart, while the people were striving to prevent his departure.

Cortes banished from Mexico.

Cortes having gone, and the inhabitants of

Mexico being in the highest state of rage and disgust, the elements of a civil war were actively at work, when certain monks of the Order of St. Dominic, who, at the request of Cortes, had been sent from Spain in the company of Ponce de Leon, now interposed to check the tumult, and to assuage the fury of the contending parties. Most of these monks had, like Ponce de Leon, been very ill on their arrival in the country; but the two who were most able to exert themselves on this occasion, Fathers Tomas Ortiz and Domingo de Betanzos, succeeded in reconciling Cortes and Estrada, so much so, that Cortes "drew out of the font"—to use an expression of those days—an infant son of Estrada, who had just been born, and, according to the narrator of this story, ever afterwards the two great men were loving gossips, "that being a relationship," he adds, "of close alliance in those times, and not a little in these."* The reconcilement of Cortes and Estrada took place in the year 1527.

The Dominican monks reconcile Cortes and Estrada.

---

* "Parentesco de grande union en aquellos tiempos, y no poco celebrado en estos."—REMESAL, *Hist. de Chiapa y Guatemala*, lib. i. cap. 8.

Every effort hitherto made to control the power of Cortes having, from some cause or other, failed, the Spanish Court began to view that power with increased jealousy and alarm. Moreover, the Court must have been bewildered by representations of the most conflicting nature, coming from the various chiefs and factions of Mexico. The Emperor, therefore, and his ministers resolved to change the form of government. Hispaniola was already governed by an *Audiencia*. The Admiral, Diego Columbus, son of the great discoverer, had never had much weight in affairs, and his death, which took place in this year (1528), put an end to any semblance even of other authority than that of the *Audiencia*. It was now thought advisable to create a similar body for Mexico, consisting of four members, with a president. Nuño de Guzman, who had hitherto been employed in the government of Panuco, was appointed President. As the presence of this new governing body was thought to be urgently wanted in Mexico, considerable haste was made in preparing the instructions for them. Among the first things that they were to attempt was the *residencia* of Cortes; and, in order that this investigation

Death of Diego Columbus, 1528.

An *Audiencia* created for Mexico, with Nuño de Guzman for President, 1528.

might be more free, they were to press Cortes to quit Mexico, and to come to Court. It may be noticed as an instance of the politic nature of the Spanish Administration, that two letters were prepared for Cortes urging him to come. One was written by the Bishop of Osma, the President of the Council of the Indies, in which the Bishop assured him that the King wished to see and consult with him, the Bishop promising to use all his own interest in favour of Cortes. In case Cortes should disregard this letter, the *Audiencia* were to produce a letter from the King, requesting his assistance and advice, and holding out assurances of favour and reward.

But the authorities in Spain need not have given themselves all this trouble, for Cortes, who seems generally to have done the right thing at the right time, suddenly appeared at Court to assist their deliberations. It is curious that, at the same moment, the other great Commander, Francisco Pizarro, was also at Court; and these two captains naturally excited the interest and admiration of the Spanish people.*

Cortes arrives in Spain, May, 1528.

* "Fue cosa notable, ver juntos á estos dos Hombres,

The arrival of Cortes—which resembled the return of Columbus, for the Conqueror of Mexico had also brought with him specimens of the riches and the curiosities of his new country—dispelled at once the vapours of doubt and calumny which had lately obscured his name and his deeds with the Spanish Court.

The details of the journey of Cortes to Court, and of his stay there, are so interesting, that they must be told. He came to seek powerful friends, and on the journey he lost the truest friend perhaps, that, amongst men, he had ever possessed. Sandoval, the constant companion of Cortes, was not divided from him in this journey. They landed together at Palos, and Sandoval feeling unwell, was left there, while Cortes went to the monastery of La Rabida (a place that had known the footsteps of many illustrious personages), to perform his devotions. Sandoval grew worse; and the man who had been in so many dangerous affrays, face to face with enemies worthy of his

---

que eran mirados, como Capitanes de los mas notables del Mundo, en aquel tiempo, aunque el uno acababa sus Hechos mas sustanciales, í el otro los comen çaba."—HERRERA, *Hist. de las Indias*, dec. IV. lib. iv. cap. 1.

prowess, was obliged to feign slumber while he saw his villanous host, a ropemaker, enter his room by stealth, and carry off his gold. Cortes, on being apprised of his friend's danger, hurried back to Palos, where he arrived in time to listen to Sandoval's last words, and to receive his last injunctions. The body of Sandoval was carried to the monastery of La Rabida, and there interred with much pomp.

Death of Sandoval.

When there are two friends of very different ages, and one dies, it is much sadder for the survivor if it be the younger one that death has taken. Sandoval might have found another Cortes, but Cortes would never find another "Son Sandoval" as he was wont to call him. Sandoval's age was about thirty when he died.

Cortes, in deep mourning, pursued his way to Court, receiving all honour from the Duke of Medina Sidonia, and other great persons who entertained him on his way. The Duke of Bejar, into whose family it had been arranged that Cortes was to marry, had prepared the Emperor's mind to receive the great Captain favourably. The next day after his arrival, Cortes had an audience.

Cortes has an interview with Charles V.

He would have knelt before his sovereign, but the Emperor begged him immediately to rise. Cortes then recounted his deeds and his sufferings, and the sinister opposition he had met with. There is reason to believe that he was a much better speaker than writer. Cautious and reserved men often are. They need the stimulus of an audience, and the pressure of a great occasion, to overcome their reserve, and to surprise them into eloquence. At the conclusion of a speech which must have been among the best worth hearing of those delivered in that age, he said that His Majesty must be tired of listening to him, and that perhaps he had spoken with too much boldness for a subject to use in his sovereign's presence. Whereupon he begged to be pardoned for any inadvertency or boldness, and to be allowed to present His Majesty with a memorial, containing the full details of the narrative he had briefly recounted. Again he sought to throw himself at the feet of the Emperor, and again Charles commanded him to rise. In fine, the Emperor's reception of him was most favourable. He listened to him readily; and, with the usual intelligence which Charles manifested in affairs, delighted to inspect (*holgó de ver*) the

His Speech.

strange men, animals, and products which the Conqueror had brought with him from Mexico.*

Gossip about Cortes, while he was at Court.

I cannot relate at any length the little anecdotes and small scandal which were current about Cortes at this time: how he fell into favour or out of favour with this or that great personage; how the Empress was a little dissatisfied at the jewels he presented to her, because those which he gave to his betrothed, Doña Juana de Zuniga, were finer and perhaps more exquisite; or how, at chapel, he took a place nearer to the Emperor than some thought his rank would warrant, although this was done at the Emperor's desire.

Undoubtedly, the favour which Charles showed to Cortes was such as might provoke the jealousy of courtiers. When Cortes fell ill, the Emperor went to visit him at his inn,—an honour of the rarest kind, and of the greatest significance. The substantial rewards which His Majesty conferred on Cortes were,—that he created him Marquis del Valle de Guaxaca; that he gave orders to the *Audiencia* of Mexico (who then were probably at Seville, preparing for their voyage), not to dis-

* Herrera, "Hist. de las Indias," dec. IV. lib. iv. cap. 1.

turb the Marquis's possessions in New Spain (*que no hiziesse novedad en sus Indios*);* that he assigned to him territories, including three-and-twenty thousand vassals; and that he gave him two rocky islands for hunting-grounds.†

The Emperor did more than all this. He listened to the advice and the recommendations of Cortes, who was enabled to benefit his friends—the Bishop of Mexico and the Franciscan monks —and to induce the Emperor to found a nunnery, and to endow with suitable portions the four daughters of Montezuma, whom Cortes had in his charge.

His requests to the Emperor.

There is on record a single sentence of the Emperor's, that must have been addressed to Cortes in some private interview, which shows the gracious esteem in which he was held by his sovereign. Borrowing a metaphor from the archery-ground, and gracefully, as it seems, alluding to a former misappreciation of the ser-

* Herrera, "Hist. de las Indias," dec. iv. lib. vi. cap. 4.

† One of these was probably the *Cerro del Marques*, which Cortes had gained on his advance to the siege of Mexico.

Herrera, dec. iv. lib. vi. cap. 4.

The Emperor declares that he will reward Cortes justly.

vices of Cortes, the Emperor said that he wished to deal with him as those who contend with the cross-bow, whose first shots go wide of the mark, and then they improve and improve, until they hit the centre of the white. So, continued His Majesty, he wished to go on until he had shot into the white of what should be done to reward the Marquis's deserts; and meanwhile, nothing was to be taken from him which he then held.*

It is very pleasing to find that Cortes did not forget his old friends the Tlascalans, but dwelt on their services, and procured from the Emperor an order that they should not be given in *encomienda* to His Majesty, or to any other person.

Finally, Cortes, with a vigilant eye to the

---

* "Su Majestad me hizo merced de decirme que no se me habia de quitar nada de lo que tenia hasta ser informado, y que se queria haber conmigo como los que se muestran á jugar á la ballesta, que los primeros tiros dan fuera del terrero, y así van enmendando hasta dar en el blanco y fiel, y desta manera su Majestad queria ir hasta dar en el fiel de lo que mis servicios merescian, que entre tanto no se me quitaba ni se me habia de quitar nada de lo que tenia."—EL MARQUES DEL VALLE *al* PRESIDENTE *del Consejo Real de las Indias.* Mejico, 20 de Setiembre de 1538. *Doc. Inéd.* tom. iv. p. 195.

future, treated with the Emperor respecting any discovery which he might make in the "Sea of the South."

One important favour Cortes could not obtain. He probably had the tact not to broach the subject with the Emperor, but his friends no doubt endeavoured to gain for him the government of Mexico. To grant this boon would have been foreign to the jealous policy of the Spanish Court, which was very reluctant to convert a discoverer, or a conqueror, into a Viceroy. Cortes was left, however, in the important office of Captain-General.

Is not appointed Governor of New Spain.

The Emperor, with his accustomed kindness, gave orders that the Indians* whom Cortes had brought with him (among whom were a son of Montezuma and a son of the Tlascalan Chief

* Cortes brought with him Indians who excelled in the games of New Spain; and perhaps the most interesting thing for a modern reader to notice is, that the balls they played with were apparently made of caoutchouc,—"Entre los quales llevaba doçe jugadores extremados de la provinçia de Tascaltecle del juego del batey, que es de pelota gruessa hecha de leche de çiertos árboles é otras mixturas, que salta la pelota mucho."—OVIEDO, *Hist. Gen. y Nat. de Indias*, lib. xxxiii. cap. 49.

Magisca, who had been baptized by the name of Lorenzo) should be clothed, and be gratified by presents, in order that they might return contented to their own country. The Emperor also ordered that a monk, named Fray Antonio de Cuidad Rodrigo, should take charge of these Indians, in order to see that they were kindly treated on their way home; and money was given to them to buy images and crucifixes, to carry with them.

CHAPTER XIX.

Arrival of the Audiencia—Great Disputes between the Protectors of the Indians and the Audiencia—the Auditors prosecute the Bishop of Mexico—The Bishop excommunicates the Auditors—A great Junta in Spain on the subject of the Indies.

THE officers constituting the *Audiencia* having received their instructions, set sail from Seville for New Spain, at the end of August, 1528, and arrived at Vera Cruz on the 6th of December of that year. From thence they sent to summon Nuño de Guzman, who was to be their President; but, without waiting for him, having the Emperor's command to that effect, they made their entrance into the city of Mexico. The climate of this place seems uniformly to have had all the bad effects which ill-doers could have wished for upon the unhappy official men and lawyers who were sent

First *Audiencia* arrives in New Spain, Dec. 1528.

thither from the mother country. Two of the Auditors, the Licenciates Parada and Francisco Maldonado fell ill, and died within thirteen days after their arrival. This circumstance would tend to diminish the suspicions, if any still existed, of Cortes having been concerned in the opportune death of Ponce de Leon. The other Auditors commenced taking the *residencia* amidst a perfect hubbub of complaints, demands, and law-suits, principally directed against the absent Cortes, who was more happily engaged than in replying to them, by solemnizing his marriage with Juana de Zuñiga, daughter of the Count of Aguilar, and niece of the Duke of Bejar.

Residencia of Cortes.

The appointment of Nuño de Guzman was a most deplorable one. He appears to have had nothing about him of the nature of a statesman, but to have been a cruel, rapacious, inconsiderate man, whose career is strikingly similar to that of some of the captains who, under Pedrarias, had desolated the Terra-Firma. This bad appointment was probably caused by the desire of the Government in Spain to have a military man, of some repute in the Indies, to supply the place of Cortes, the fear of that great Conqueror being the

ruling motive which had given rise to the appointment of the *Audiencia.* When Nuño de Guzman came to join his colleagues in Mexico, though some care was taken in the general affairs of Government, yet the Auditors were accused of attending more to their private interests than to their public duties, and of being wholly neglectful of those royal orders, upon which so much stress had been laid, touching the liberty and good treatment of the Indians. Thence grew vehement disputes between the Auditors and the Protectors of the Indians,—not only the official Protectors, but the Franciscan Monks in the city of Mexico, who demanded the execution of these royal orders, saying, that otherwise the royal conscience would not be discharged. Nuño de Guzman and his Auditors, in the usual way of factious persons, who meet an accusation made against them by charges against the opposite party which have nothing to do with the matter in hand, replied that the Monks and the Protectors were partisans of Cortes, and rather defenders of him than of the Indians. Eventually the whole town was engaged on one side or other of these two factions; and, to use the words of the

Great dispute between the Protectors of the Indians and the new *Audiencia.*

royal historiographer, "so things went on with much confusion and shamefulness."*

Complaints from both factions were addressed to the Emperor, the Auditors accusing Cortes of having had the most treasonable intentions, declaring that the Bishops under pretence of being protectors of the Indians, meddled with the royal jurisdiction; that the Franciscan Monks were devoted partisans of the Marquis del Valle; and that, with regard to the Indians, the opinion of the *Audiencia* was, that the *encomiendas* should be made perpetual, in order that their masters might treat them with more love,—a plausible, but very insufficient, reason to justify a system of servitude.

The *Audiencia* advises the Emperor to make *encomiendas* perpetual.

On the other hand, the Bishop of Mexico was not slow in informing His Majesty of his view of the question. A letter of this prelate's exists, which perhaps was one of those which Charles the Fifth had before him when he wrote from Genoa, ordering a junta of the Great Council of Spain to be summoned, in order to consider again the government of Mexico; and this letter is so

* Herrera, "Hist. de las Indias," dec. IV. lib. iv. cap. 11.

admirably descriptive of the state of things which took place after the arrival of the first *Audiencia* at Mexico, that the Bishop's own words must be quoted. The date of the letter is August the 27th, 1529. "Also," the Bishop writes, "there came to me secretly, to make their complaints, the Lords of Huaxocingo, who at the time were in *encomienda* to Don Hernando Cortes, and they said that they served Hernando Cortes as his *mayordomos* commanded, and gave the tribute which was agreed upon, but that for some time the President and Auditors had cast upon them another tribute in addition to this; and what they thought more hard still was, that they had to bring each day, to the house of each Auditor, for his maintenance, seven fowls, and many quails, and seventy eggs, and wood, charcoal, and other trifling things, together with a large quantity of maize."* It appears, too, from the Bishop's letter, that this maize was not of their own growing, but that they had to buy it, and that their resources were now exhausted. The greatest

Bishop of Mexico's letter to the Emperor.

* "Carta de Fray Juan de Zumarraga, Obispo de Mexico; Coleccion de Muñoz," MS., tom. 78.

Transport service the great burden of the Indians.

grievance, however, which these Chiefs had to complain of, was their being compelled to provide for the transport of these commodities. Their town was eight or ten leagues off; the way was cumbered with snow; and, to maintain such a daily service, a great many persons were necessary. Indeed, not only men, but pregnant women, and boys, were obliged to assist in carrying these burdens. The result was, that a hundred and thirteen persons had already died from this enforced toil. The Auditors arrived in December, 1528; so that in six or eight months, such had been the loss of life in a single *encomienda*, from this apparently trifling service of transport imposed upon it. The Chiefs, after begging the Bishop to defend them, assured him that no other resource was left for them but to fly to the mountains. "To whom," he says, "I replied the best I could, telling them that such proceedings were not the will of Your Majesty, and holding out to them hopes of a speedy remedy; so they went away secretly consoled. Then I

The Bishop endeavours to protect the Indians.

spoke to the President and Auditors, with no little affliction to myself, from my inability to remedy the wrong, informing them that certain *padres*

had written to me from Huaxocingo (that the *Audiencia* might not suspect that the Indian Chiefs had come to me to complain), and I told them (the Auditors) that I had Your Majesty's command to defend the Indians, and that I could not but endeavour to do so, even if I knew that it would cost me my life, and that they must bring their demands upon these Indians down to what was just, and that they should keep on record that I would do what I could to prevent these deaths. The President replied to me, that the Indians must do what the *Audiencia* ordered them, whether they died or not; and that if I put myself forward to defend them, the *Audiencia* would chastise me, as the Bishop of Zamora* had been chastised; and that the Indians must be taxed, and must live in the way that they ordered, and no other."†

Nor were these idle threats. The Bishop per-

---

* Don Antonio de Acuña, Bishop of Zamora, who was strangled in the fortress of Simancas. His crime was, having taken the side of the *Comunidades* in the war against Charles the Fifth, on his accession to the throne.

† "Carta de Fray Juan de Zumarraga, C. Obispo de México; Coleccion de Muñoz," MS., tom. 78.

severed in maintaining the good cause,—preaching in favour of the instruction, conversion, and preservation of the natives, urging that a stop should be put to the sumptuous works which the Auditors were continually making at the cost of the Mexicans, and demanding the fulfilment of the royal ordinances. The Auditors met this last move on the part of the Bishop Protector, by condemning him in his temporalities; and, threatening the heaviest penalties, they prohibited the King's officers, and those who had to pay the tithes, from giving any means of support to the Bishop or his clergy. This prohibition, as appears from the law proceedings in this case, was in force for the whole of the year 1530. The Bishop, on his side, fought with spiritual weapons, and excommunicated the Auditors.

The Auditors proceed to extremities against the Bishop. 1530.

The Bishop excommunicates them.

Franciscan Monks on the side of the Bishops.

The Franciscan Monks, who were ranged on the side of the Bishop, in making excuses afterwards (which they do with all humility), for the sad disturbances of these times, declare in the strongest terms that false witnesses were brought against them by the *Audiencia*. In the course of this statement, the monks take occasion to give their view of the natives. "It is a gentle

people," they say, "doing more from fear than from virtue, and they work well, if they are permitted to enjoy the fruits of their labours. . . . . They lie to a reasonable amount, but little to any one who treats them well, or at least not so much" (this is the account that might be given as regards the truthfulness of most people in a state of servitude); "they are well disposed to religion, confessing very well, so that there is no need of asking them questions. They are given to drunkenness, and require restraint. . . . . The children of our monastery already know much, and teach others. They sing plain chant, and accompany the organ tolerably well."*

---

* "Mienten razonablemente, pero poco con quien bien los trata, ó no tanto. Estos males tienen con otros bienes, que es gente que vienen bien á nuestra fé, confiésanse mucho bien así que no tien necesidad de preguntas. Por la mayor parte son viciosos en se emborrachar, í tienen gran necesidad de se les impedir . . . . para su salbacion é policía. Los niños de nuestras casas saben ya mucho, í enseñan á muchos. Cantan canto llano í canto de órgano conpetentemente."—*Al Consejo de Yndias*, FRAI JUAN, *electo*,—FRAI MARTINUS DE VALENCIA *Custos*, &c., FRAI LUIS DE FUENSALIDA, *Guardian de* TEZCUCO,—FRAI ANTONIO ORTIZ, *G. de*

All these complaints and recriminations from the chief men in Mexico, which probably came together, and were delivered to Charles the Fifth at Barcelona, as he was on his way to Italy after the Treaty of Cambray, must have been a source of considerable disappointment and mortification to him. There could have been little doubt, in any statesman's mind, that Nuño de Guzmán must be removed, and the Auditors superseded, "these ministers," to use the sarcastic words of Herrera, "having industriously conformed themselves to attend in no respect to the instructions which had been given to them." Charles the Fifth seems to have submitted the whole affair to his Government in Spain, and not merely to have referred to them the immediate question connected with the conduct of this *Audiencia*, but the general and great question of the liberty of the Indians in Mexico and elsewhere—namely, whether they were to be given in *encomienda* to their conquerors.

Charles V. is made acquainted with the state of the Government at Mexico. 1529.

Charles V. refers the affairs of Mexico to his Ministers.

Mexico, — Frai Antonio Maldonado, *G. de* Tlaclal-maxala, Fray Francisco Gimenez, *G. de* Cempoala. *De México desta casa de San Francisco*, 27 *Marzo*, 1531. *Coleccion de* Munoz, MS., tom. 79.

It was from Genoa,* and while the Emperor was engaged in inspecting his new conquests in Italy, that he wrote to his Government in Spain, of which the Empress was the head, commanding that a great Junta should be formed, consisting of the Council of State, the Council of the Royal Revenues, and the Council of the Indies. The reports from New Spain, and the already numerous royal orders and laws, which had been published in reference to the three great branches of Indian government, namely, the kind treatment, the liberty, and the conversion of the Indians (*para el buen tratamiento, libertad í conversion de los Indios*),† were to be laid formally before the Council, for them to decide upon the future legislation that would be necessary "for the discharge

A most important Junta held in Spain in reference to the Indies. 1529.

* "Vuestra Magestad desde Génova, vistas las causas í razones que de Nueva-España de Governador, Religiosos, í otras personas vinieron embió á mandar que nos juntasemos los del Consejo Real, í de la Hacienda, con el Presidente, í los del Consejo de Yndias."—*Al* EMPERADOR, *el* ARZOBISPO DE SANTIAGO. *Presidente del Consejo Real, i el* CONDE (DE OSORNO), DON GARCIA MANRIQUE; *de Madrid*, 10 *Diciembre*, 1529. *Coleccion de* MUNOZ, MS., tom. 78.

† "Coleccion de Muñoz," MS., tom. 78.

of His Majesty's conscience, and the good government of those regions."

Cortes asked for his opinion.

It was probably on this occasion that the Council of the Indies asked for the opinion of Cortes in the matters of Indian slavery and *encomiendas;* for there exists a letter without date, written by Cortes to the Emperor, in reference to the question before the Council of the Indies.

Cortes discusses the whole subject with much brevity, force, and logical power. In order to secure the conquest, there must, he says, be a sufficient number of Spaniards in the newly-conquered land. These men must be supported. They cannot be paid in money; and the most convenient mode of payment will be by *encomiendas.* He then touches on the danger of depriving the Spaniards of their Indians, and suggests that the possession of these Indians tends to make the Spaniards root themselves in the new lands, whence will spring taxes and customs' duties for His Majesty.

He is, therefore, of opinion that the Indians should be given to the Spaniards. But the questions then remain—Who should give them? to

whom should they be given; and how should they be given?*

To decide these difficult questions he suggests a reference to the past history of the conquest in the Indies;† and, alluding to the ruin which had taken place in the West India Islands, he desires that it should be investigated whether this mischief proceeded from the conquest or from the course of government afterwards.‡

Cortes refers to the history of the West India Islands.

He suggests that no discovery or conquest should be attempted without the express licence of the Emperor, and that certain qualifications should be required in the person who is to receive any such licence.

With regard to making slaves, his opinion is, that on no pretext should it be allowed in the course of conquest. But when countries have

---

* "Pero resta dezir lo que se á de dar, y á quien y cómo, que es donde pende todo."—Autograph Letter of CORTES to the Emperor, signed "El Marques del Valle," in the possession of Mr. Henry Stevens, of Vermont.

† "Lo primero advertir ante todas cosas en saver qué es la que se tubo en las conquistas que se an hecho?"—*Ut supra.*

‡ "Saber si este daño proçedió de la conquista ó del proçeso de la governaçion?"—*Ut supra.*

been conquered, if a rebellion should take place, he would then allow the captives to be made slaves. With regard to the slaves in Mexico, he thinks that many of them have been made slaves unjustly; but he would not approve of any investigation into this matter, on account of the difficulty. He would not, however, have their children brought up as slaves. Such were the counsels of Cortes; but the Junta summoned by Charles came to a much more favourable conclusion respecting the Indians.

Dec. 10, 1529.

The result of this great Council's deliberations was communicated to the Emperor by the Archbishop of Santiago and Don Garcia Manrique, Conde de Osorno, in these words:—"It has appeared to all of us that entire liberty should be given to the Indians, and that all the *encomiendas* which have been made of them should be taken away; and because it appears that to take them away at one stroke would produce inconvenience, and that the Spaniards might desert the land, that a moderate tribute should be fixed for the Indians to pay, and that the half of that tribute should be given for the first year to the *Encomenderos*, and

Recommendations of the Junta.

afterwards Your Majesty will be able to give vassals to whosoever shall deserve it, reserving for yourself the head townships." The emphatic order on this subject is given in one word (*Fiat*), "Let it be done," which is placed after the paragraph, quoted above, of the Report.

CHAPTER XX.

The second Audiencia arrives in Mexico—Proceedings of the Auditors—The Poverty of Cortes.

THAT ever-recurring difficulty—to find a head and hand which should carry into execution good laws,—appears to have been fully present to the minds of the royal councillors; for, in the same letter in which they announced their unanimous opinion to His Majesty respecting the liberty of the Indians, they suggested that a bold and prudent "caballero," a man of good estate (*hacendado*), should be sent as President of the Audiencia. The Conde de Oropesa was named, but he would not accept the office. Afterwards, the Mariscal de Fromesta, and Don Antonio de Mendoza, son of the Marqués de Mondejar, were applied to; but their demands

Dec. 10, 1529.

were so exorbitant, that the Council informed His Majesty that their thoughts were turned to others.*

It is not surprising that men of great name and station in Spain, who fulfilled the requisite conditions of being bold, prudent, and of large estate, should demand extraordinary powers and privileges, before undertaking a charge which no one hitherto had come well out of. Lists have been made of the conquerors and governors in the New World, as of men, all of whose careers were signalized by miserable or disgraceful terminations; and in an age which had Machiavelli's "*Prince*" in its hands, and when politics had begun to be considered scientifically, it was not difficult to know that one of the most lamentable positions in the world is to hold an office of great state and great apparent power, and in reality to be bound by all manner of invisible fetters, being secretly at the mercy of some obscure official people around you or at home.

The difficulty, for the present, of finding a man of weight to preside over the new *Audiencia* was

* "Coleccion de Muñoz," MS., tom. 78.

obviated by choosing a person who had already filled a similar office, undertaken at a period of like confusion in another part of the Indies.

Don Sebastian Ramirez chosen as President of the *Audiencia.*

This was Don Sebastian Ramirez de Fuenleal, Bishop of St. Domingo in Hispaniola, who had been sent to that island to be President of an *Audiencia* which had been for some time established there. In this office his success is thus briefly described:—"He gave authority to the administration of justice. The rivalries between the Auditors and the other royal officers ceased. Each one kept within the limits of his office; and in all respects there was quiet."

The Government of Spain was fortunate in being able to command the services of such a man as Don Sebastian for the presidency of the new *Audiencia* to be sent to Mexico. This body was entirely renewed, as Auditors were sent, not only to replace those who had died on first arriving in the country, but also to supersede the two who had lived to do so much mischief. All the new Auditors were licentiates, and their names were Vasco de Quiroga, Alonzo Maldonado, Francisco de Ceynos, and Juan de Salmerón.

Audiencia renewed.

This last-mentioned Auditor was a man of

some experience in the Indies, having been Alcalde Mayor of the province of Castilla del Oro. To each of them was given a large salary —600,000 *maravedis*,*—in order that they might not be tempted to undertake any private enterprise for gain. The Empress wrote to Don Sebastian with her own hand, informing him of his appointment, and mentioning that the new Auditors would call for him at St. Domingo, on their way out to Mexico.

Large salary for Auditors.

This new *Audiencia* had very complicated business awaiting them. The representations which the former one had made against Cortes had been so manifestly unjust, that it was intrusted to these new Auditors to take another *residencia* of Cortes; then they were to take a *residencia* of Nuño de Guzman; they were to settle the dispute between him and the Bishop Protector; they were publicly to reprimand the former Auditors; and we have already seen, from the proceedings of the Great Junta before mentioned, that these new Auditors would have to

Complicated business awaiting these Auditors.

* Equal, I believe, to 416*l.* 13*s.* 4*d.* in English money —a large salary in those days.

execute a very difficult commission with regard to the liberty of the Indians, if anything was to be done in accordance with the important decision already pronounced by that Council.

The order of their entry into Mexico settled.

Amongst other instructions given to them, there is one which suited well with Spanish stateliness, as it settled the form and order in which they were to enter Mexico, the chief seat of their government. The great seal was to be placed in a little casket, borne by a mule covered with velvet; and when they entered the city, the President was to be on the right hand of the seal, and one of the Auditors on the left, the other Auditors going before, according to their rank. They were all to be lodged in the house of the Marquis del Valle. The Marquis himself was allowed at that time to return to New Spain; but he had received orders from the Empress not for the present to enter Mexico, nor even to come within ten leagues of that city, at least, as I conjecture, not until the *audiencia* were finally settled in power. He went back, clothed with the authority of Captain-General; and so far, at least, Cortes was not treated unwisely or ungenerously by the Spanish

Cortes returns to New Spain, July 15, 1530.

Government. He was received with vivid demonstrations of delight by great numbers of the people in New Spain, both Spaniards and Indians. Indeed, they offered to place themselves at his disposal, and to put his enemies in the *Audiencia* to death. They were clamorous in telling him what they had suffered during his absence; but he, with his accustomed prudence, did what he could to soothe them, entirely put aside their offers of vengeance, and even strove to divert them by public games and entertainments.

On the 15th of September, 1530, a few months after the departure from Spain of the Marquis, the new auditors sailed from Seville, and arrived in New Spain at the beginning of the year 1531. The form of their entry into Mexico was somewhat disturbed by the absence of their President, the Bishop of St. Domingo, whom they were not able to bring with them, as they could not succeed in entering the port of St. Domingo, "by reason," as an old chronicler tells us, "of the things of the sea being more doubtful than certain."* This was to be regretted, for graver

The second *Audiencia* arrives at Mexico. 1531.

* "Por ser las cosas de la Mar, mas dudosas, que ciertas."—TORQUEMADA, *Monarquía Indiana*, lib. v. cap. 9.

reasons than the injury to the pomp of their entrance into Mexico; but the new Auditors, without waiting for their President, commenced their arduous business; and we find, from a letter written to the Emperor some months afterwards, that not a day had passed, not even the festivals of the Church, in which they had not been sitting in council ten or twelve hours together, for the dispatch of business, dealing, as they graphically express it, "with a new land, new kinds of business, and with minds inclined to dangerous innovations, which every day are excited by new thoughts."

The various reforms in the Indies which were projected at Court, and some of which were carried into execution in New Spain by this *Audiencia*, must have told considerably upon the fortunes of Cortes—a man who, if he received much, always spent much; with whom, to use an expression of King Ferdinand's, money never rested. The expenses he incurred in preparing for expeditions in the South Sea were very great, and not remunerative. Whatever may have been the causes, it is a striking fact, that there came a period when the conqueror of Mexico could not

afford to live for more than a month at a time in the great city which he had conquered, devastated, repeopled, and rebuilt. "I have enough to do," he says (in a letter written at Mexico, and dated in the year 1538), "to maintain myself in a village, where I have my wife, without daring to reside in this city, or come into it, as I have not the means to live in it; and if sometimes I come because I cannot help doing so, and remain in it a month, I am obliged to fast for a year."*

Poverty of the greatest resident in New Spain.

Those who care to observe human affairs curiously have often speculated upon the change that would be produced by a very slight knowledge of the future. If men could see, they say, but ten years in advance, the greater part of mankind would not have heart to continue their labours. The farmer would quit his plough, the merchant his merchandize, the scholar his books.

* "Yo tengo harto que hacer en mantenerme en un aldea donde tengo mi muger, sin osar residir en esta cibdad ni venir á ella por no tener que comer en ella; y si alguna vez vengo porque no puedo escusarlo, si estoy en ella un mes, tengo necesidad de ayunar un año."—*Carta del* MARQUÉS DEL VALLE, *escrita desde Méjico con fecha de* 20 *de Setiembre, de* 1538, *al* PRESIDENTE DEL CONSEJO REAL DE LAS INDIAS. *Doc. Inéd.*, tom. iv. p. 197.

Still, there would remain a few faithful to their pursuits—lovers, fanatics, and benevolent men. But of all those whom ten years' prescience would induce to lay down their work in utter discontent as the future unrolled itself before their wondering eyes, the conqueror, perhaps, would be the man who first would stay his hand. For the results of conquest are among the greatest disappointments in the world. The policy which seems so judicious and so nicely adjusted that it well repays the anxious nights of thought that have been spent upon it, would, even with the small foreknowledge of ten years, be seen to be inconsequent, foolish, and mischievous. The ends which appear so precious that the blood of armies may justly be spilt in the hope of attaining them, would be clearly discerned to be noxious and ludicrous. All the vast crimes which are gilded by motives of policy would be seen in their naked horror; and the most reckless of statesmen or warriors would start back appalled at the sufferings he was about to inflict upon the world for inadequate and futile causes. When, however, the warrior happened to be a fanatic, the future on this earth would not disturb him.

A slight knowledge of the future would paralyse the arm of the conqueror.

He would be equally ready to slaughter his thousands, to devastate provinces, and to ruin, as mostly happens, his own fortunes, whatever the ten years' annals, written prophetically on the wall, might disclose to him.

Cortes, as a statesman and a man of the world, might have shuddered, if he could have foreseen the fate of himself, his companions, and the nations he came to conquer. But, sheathed as he was in the impenetrable armour of fanaticism, he would probably have counted these things as no loss, provided that the True Faith should thereby be proclaimed more widely in the New World. This must be his excuse, and this, no doubt, was his comfort, when he contemplated the sorry end of his labours as regarded himself and his own fortunes.

Later in life, we find him writing to the Emperor in the same strain of complaint as that related above.* The latter days of Cortes bear a strange resemblance to those of Columbus, and,

The latter days of Cortes.

* "Véome viejo, y pobre y empeñado en este reino en mas de veinte mil ducados, sin mas de ciento otros que he gastado de los que traje é me han enviado, que algunos dellos debo tambien, que los han tomado pres-

indeed, to those of Charles the Fifth himself. Men of this great stamp seldom know when to put a limit to their exertions, and to occupy themselves solely in securing the conquests they have made. And, as the nature of things is always against an energetic man, some day or other, especially when he grows weaker and older, adverse circumstances, to his astonishment, triumph over him. Besides, even supposing him to be very prudent, and anxious to undertake nothing which he cannot master, the field for his exertions inevitably widens with success. Instead of a line to pursue, he has a large area to command. Envy meanwhile increases as he becomes more conspicuous. Many men lean upon him when he is known to be strong. His attention is distracted; and even without any deterioration of character, or failing of force, he is destroyed by the large development of new difficulties which grow up around him. As the early history of the Indies teems with commanders who ulti-

tados para enviarme, y todos corren cambios."—*Carta ó Memorial de* HERNAN CORTES *al* EMPERADOR CARLOS V. *Valladolid, 3 de Febrero, de* 1544. *Doc. Inéd.*, tom 1, p. 45.

mately prove unfortunate, it is but fair to look into the natural causes of failure which would beset them in any country, but which would be stronger in a newly-discovered country than elsewhere.

CHAPTER XXI.

The Expeditions sent out by Cortes to the North of Mexico—Cortes returns to Spain—His grievances and troubles.

I WILL now endeavour to give very briefly an account of what Cortes did during the ten years which elapsed from the time of his return from Spain to Mexico in 1530 to that of his finally returning in 1540 to the mother country, where he spent the remainder of his days.

Though Cortes could not afford to live in the city of Mexico, he did afford, and was obliged to afford, the disbursement of the necessary expenses for fitting out expeditions to make discovery in what was called the Sea of the South. I say, "he was obliged to afford," because the Emperor

had imposed upon him the condition of endeavouring to make these discoveries.

The man, whose name in after times was most noted for discovery in those regions, was a certain Franciscan monk, Marcos of Nice, who in a missionary enterprise made great discoveries, as he said, to the north of Mexico. He returned, giving a wonderful account of what he called "the seven cities of Sybola," and saying how, "the farther you went northwards (*i. e.* towards the country now known as the gold region of California), the more peopled the country was, and the more rich with gold and turquoises." Cortes, however, had long before commenced these expeditions to the north of Mexico, sending out captain after captain to make discoveries, all of whom were utterly unsuccessful. Cortes then resolved to go himself; but neither was he more successful, as regards the results of discovery, than his captains had been. Certainly, he discovered California; but he left that country, little conjecturing the riches which he had probably trodden under foot. It was on that occasion that his second wife wrote him a most touching letter, begging him to return

to his Marquisate in Mexico, to think of his boys and girls, and no longer to tempt fortune, but to content himself with the heroic actions he had already performed, and with his world-wide fame.

Cortes returns to Mexico from California.

Cortes accordingly returned to Mexico, and was received with great joy by the authorities and by all the other inhabitants; for at that time every Spaniard was in great terror lest the native Indians should take advantage of the absence of Cortes to revolt.

I cannot help remarking that this tenderness on the part of the second wife of Cortes, and which probably induced him to hasten his return, gives some indication, of what certainly was the case, that in private and domestic life he was very loveable. He was no longer attractive from the beauty of his person. In fact, ever since his return from Honduras, in which expedition he had suffered much hardship and privation, and before his marriage with his second wife, he had become a sickly diseased man. Indeed he was so much altered that many people did not know him again.*

---

* "E aun muchos le desconosçian." — OVIEDO, lib. xxxiii. cap. 49.

He was now exceedingly fat and swollen, and it was in vain that he endeavoured to conceal the ravages of premature old age by dyeing his grey beard black.

With almost every great man there is a time of culmination, after which there is mostly disaster and decadence. This was pre-eminently the case with Cortes. His fortunes culminated on the day when he took Mexico. Afterwards he had but a sorry life of it. As Bernal Diaz says, "Everything turned to thorns with him." Not that this daunted him; for even after his return from California, he equipped and sent out another great expedition to make discovery in the Sea of the South. This, too, was unsuccessful.

Neither in what may be considered his private undertakings was his career, after the taking of Mexico, the least more prosperous. He was in terrible feud with the King's Officers upon a point of much nicety connected with his private estate. He contended that the Emperor had intended to give him all the Indians in the Townships which the Emperor had assigned to him;

---

* "Todo le tornó en Espinas."

and he reckoned his Indians by the heads of families. The King's Officers, on the other hand, contended that the number of Indians assigned to the Marquis was to be reckoned according to age. They included in their reckoning every adult male in a household, whether master, servant, son or slave. Thus they sometimes counted as many as fifteen in a household where Cortes had only counted one.

Then, again, Cortes was in feud with the person of highest authority in New Spain. The Spanish Government had sent, in 1535, a Viceroy to New Spain, namely, Don Antonio de Mendoza, a man of great ability and prudence, but who could not live at peace with Cortes; and many and grievous were the disputes between the Viceroy and the Captain General about these expeditions to the Sea of the South, in which, by the way, Cortes had expended no less a sum than 300,000 pesos.

Impoverished in means, vexed with law-suits, annoyed with contentions against Royal Officers, Cortes led a miserable life in Mexico. Imagining that from his former reception at the Court of Spain, his presence there would enable him to

prevail over all his difficulties, he resolved to return to Spain to fight his battles there. Accordingly, in the year 1540, he quitted Mexico for that purpose, little imagining that he was leaving for ever the scene of his conquest.

Quits Mexico for Spain, 1540.

The Empress Donna Isabella died in the year 1539; and Cortes and all his suite were in deep mourning for Her Majesty when they arrived at court. Bernal Diaz was also in mourning, as also Fernando Pizarro, and other persons who had come from Peru and New Spain upon business. Probably their suits of mourning were in accord with their discontented countenances, and they were generally called "the Mourning Indians of Peru."*

The Marquis accompanied the Emperor in his expedition to Algeria (A. D. 1541); and, as it was justly said, lost more in that unfortunate expedition than the Emperor himself; for, being shipwrecked, Cortes lost the valuable jewels, chiefly emeralds, which he carried with him, and which formed no inconsiderable part of his fortune.

But his mortification in that enterprise was

* "Los Indianos Peruleros Enlutados."

greater than his pecuniary loss. He, then the greatest Captain of his age, was not even summoned to the Council of War. It was in vain that he offered to retrieve the fortunes of the Emperor in that disastrous campaign, and pledged himself to take Algiers if he might only have the command of the troops who were there, without any reinforcements. The soldiers were willing to act with him, but the sailors were not; and the people in authority would not listen to him, nay even, as some say, mocked at his pretensions. The enterprise was abandoned, and the Moors were left to be, by their piratical exploits, a terror and an injury to Europe for many generations.*

The poets say that "Care sits behind a man and follows him wherever he goes." So does ill-success; and henceforward the life of Cortes was almost invariably unsuccessful. There is an anecdote told of him (resting upon no higher authority than that of Voltaire) which, though evidently untrue, tells in a mythical way the reception which Cortes met with at the Spanish Court; and his feelings as regards that reception.

---

* See Sandoval, "Hist. de Carlos V.," lib. xxv. cap. 12.

One day he broke through the crowd which surrounded the carriage of the Emperor and jumped on the step.

"Who are you?" said the Emperor in astonishment.

"I am a man," replied Cortes fiercely, "who has given you more provinces than your ancestors have left you cities."

Quitting fiction, however, and returning to fact, there is a letter extant addressed by Cortes to the Emperor Charles the Fifth which conveys more forcibly than even a large extent of narrative could do, the troubles, vexations, and disappointments which Cortes had to endure at this latter period of his life, and his own feelings with regard to them. It is one of the most touching letters ever written by a subject to a sovereign. I will here translate some of it, greatly condensing those parts of the letter which relate to the business in hand, and which would be as wearisome to the reader to read, as they were to the writer to write; for doubtless, it was not the first time, by many times, that Cortes had set down the same grievance in writing.

The letter bears date Valladolid; the 3rd of February, 1544. It begins thus:—

The letter of Cortes to the Emperor.

"Sacred Cesarian Catholic Majesty:—I thought that having laboured in my youth, it would so profit me that in my old age I might have ease and rest; and now it is forty years that I have been occupied in not sleeping, in eating ill, and sometimes eating neither well nor ill, in bearing armour, in placing my person in danger, in spending my estate and my life, all in the service of God, bringing sheep into his sheepfold—which were very remote from our hemisphere, unknown, and whose names are not written in our writings—also increasing and making broad the name and patrimony of my King—gaining for him, and bringing under his yoke and Royal sceptre, many and very great kingdoms of many barbarous nations, all won by my own person, and at my own expense; without being assisted in anything, on the contrary, being much hindered by many jealous and envious persons who, like leeches, have been filled to bursting with my blood." *

He then proceeds to say that for the part which God has had in his labours and watchings,

* "Sin ser ayudado de cosa alguna, antes muy estorbado por muchos émulos é invidiosos que como sanguijuelas han rebentado de hartos de mi sangre."

he is sufficiently paid, because it was His work; and it was not without a reason that Providence was pleased that so great a work should be accomplished by so weak a medium, in order that it might be seen that to God alone the good work must be attributed.

Cortes then says that for what he has done for the King, he has always been satisfied with the remuneration he has received. The King has been grateful to him, has honoured him, and has rewarded him; and, he adds, that His Majesty knows that the rewards and honours which the Emperor offered were, in the opinion of Cortes, so far greater than his merits, that he refused to receive them.

What, however, His Majesty did mean him to receive, he has not received. That which His Majesty has given has been so completely without fruit, that it would have been better for Cortes not to have had it, but that he should have taken care of his private estate, and not spent the fruit of *that* in defending himself against "the Fiscal of Your Majesty, which defence has been, and is, a more difficult undertaking than to win the land of the enemy."

He then implores His Majesty that he will be pleased to render clear the goodwill which he had shown to reward him. "I see myself," he exclaims, "old and poor and indebted." Not only have I no repose in my old age, but I foresee labour and trouble until my death." And he adds, "Please God that the mischief may not go beyond death; but may finish with the body, and not exist for ever, since whosoever has such toil in defending his bodily estate, cannot avoid injuring his soul."

All that he asks is that his appeal may be heard: that members of the King's Council be added to the Council of the Indies; and that the cause may be determined, and judgment given, without any further delay. "For otherwise I must leave it and lose it, and must return to my home as I am no longer of the age to go about to hostelries; but should withdraw myself to make my account clear with God, since it is a large one that I have,*

* Here the words of the celebrated chronicler, Menstrelet, may well be appended:—"It is of some moment when a king or great prince dies, who may, perhaps, have caused the deaths of numbers of human creatures like themselves; for I believe that in the other world

and little life is left to me to discharge my conscience; and it will be better for me to lose my estate than my soul." * He concludes by saying, that "He is of Your Catholic Majesty the very humble servant and vassal, who kisses your very royal feet and hands—the Marques del Valle."

The first feeling of every reader of this letter must be regret that so great a monarch as Charles

---

they will have enough to do, more especially respecting this circumstance, that a poor man, with six or seven small children, not worth twenty sols in the world, shall be taxed from ten to twenty sols, and when the collector shall come to receive the tax, finding the man worth nothing, and without means of raising the money, he commits him to prison, where he languishes out his days. Now I would like to have shown any written law for this injustice; but no one will attempt so to do, because everyone is eager to push himself forward in this world. May God assist the poor people!" [The account which Cortes gives related more to slaughter than to taxation, and therefore was more than regal in its seriousness and extent.]

* "Porque no tengo ya edad para andar por mesones, sino para recojerme á aclarar mi cuenta con Dios, pues la tengo larga, y poco vida para dar los descargos, y será mejor dejar perder la hacienda quel ánima,"—*Documentos Inéditos para la Historia de España*, tom. 1, Madrid, 1842.

the Fifth should have given occasion for any such letter to be written to him. But this feeling is one that experience will not justify. Kings and Kaisers and the greatest men are generally found impotent against the "Fiscal" of their respective countries. There is always some small-minded clerk to find or make difficulties, and to raise objections. And this noxious individual thinks he is doing great service to the state while he chiefly dwells upon what ought to be "unconsidered trifles." He is the worm who gnaws at the greatness of states, discouraging noble enterprise, and worrying the heart out of those who would do something for the world. He has often more to do with the downfall of nations than historians, who have not been versed in affairs, can readily imagine.

If it had not been for these fiscal troubles, and for the sense of injury which rankled in his mind, the latter days of Cortes were not outwardly unhappy. He passed them in a manner which might have satisfied almost any other man but the restless and impatient conqueror. Men of letters cultivated his society; and the meetings of an Academy were held at his house. Peter

de Novarra published in 1547 forty Moral Dialogues, partly the result of conversations held at the house of Cortes.* I cannot agree with those who think that Cortes was a learned man. In one of his letters I find him telling the Emperor when one of his captains had rebelled against him that people would say it was *pena pecati*, on account of the false idea they had of his conduct to Velasquez. This is not the usual way in which the words "*pœna peccati*" are spelt. I have no doubt that Cortes delighted in the society of learned men as the first Napoleon did in that of scientific men; but converse with learned men could not occupy the mind or heart of either of these restless conquerors. Cortes wished to return to Mexico; but all the influence of his great connections could not procure leave from the Emperor for Cortes to return until certain pending suits were settled; and they never were settled during the lifetime of Cortes.

In addition to these vexations he had a domestic trouble which doubtless caused him much

* Mr. Ticknor says:—"I find nothing in these to illustrate the character of Cortes, except the fact that such meetings were held at his house."

mortification. His daughter Donna Maria was engaged to one of the greatest nobles in Spain; but ultimately the young man refused to fulfil the engagement. Some say that this caused the death of Cortes. But this is not so. He was broken alike in health and in spirits, by reason of the many reverses he had met with in these his latter days.

We live, to a great measure, upon success; and there is no knowing the agony that an unvarying course of ill-success causes to a sanguine and powerful mind which feels that, if only such and such small obstacles were removed out of its way, it could again shine forth with all its pristine force and brightness.

To meet this rejected daughter, who was coming from New Spain, Cortes went to Seville. There he was taken ill, and, being molested by the importunity of many persons who came to see him on business, he retired to a small village, about half a league from Seville, called Castilleja de la Cuesta. He also sought retirement for the purpose, as Bernal Diaz says, of making his will*

* His will, however, is dated Seville.

and preparing his soul for death. "And when he had settled his worldly affairs, our Lord Jesus Christ was pleased to take him from this troublesome world." He died on the 2nd of December, 1547, being then sixty-two years of age.

Cortes was buried with much pomp in the private chapel of the Dukes of Medina Sidonia in the San Franciscan monastery of Seville. Afterwards his remains were taken to New Spain and interred at Tezcuco.

The legitimate children that he left were Don Martin, Donna Maria, who was to have been married to Don Perez Osorio, but who afterwards married the Conde of Luna de Leon; Donna Juana, Donna Catalina and Donna Leonor. He also left two sons and three daughters illegitimate. In his will he leaves money to found a hospital, a college and a nunnery. The marquis, as his chaplain tells us, was always a great almsgiver. He would even run into debt to give alms to poor people; and, on his death-bed, he inculcated the sacred duty of almsgiving upon his heir, whom he loved, and who loved him, Don Martin Cortes.

The following extract from the will of Cortes

shows how anxious he was to make a restitution in those cases wherein he had acted, or might have acted, unjustly.

Extract from the Will of Cortes.

"Item. Because doubts have arisen with respect to those natives of New Spain who have been made slaves, as well those of war as of ransom, namely, whether they can be held with a sufficiently good conscience or not, and up to this time the question is not settled, I desire that it should be ascertained what in this matter I ought not to have done, and that for the discharge of conscience as regards these slaves, that should be done which ought to be done in respect of those which I hold. And I charge upon my son and heir Don Martin, and upon his successors, that they should use all diligence for the discharge of my conscience and theirs in this matter."

He then desires that, with regard to all those lands which he has taken for gardens, vineyards, cotton-grounds and other purposes, it should be ascertained whether they were the property of the natives; and, if so, restitution and compensation should be made to the real owners.

He also desires that the personal services which he has received from his vassals, in addition

to their tribute, should be ascertained; and, as there are doubts whether these personal services ought to have been rendered to him, it should be seen whether any of them were rendered unjustly; and if so, full payment and restitution should be made.

It remains that a general and a just estimate should be made of the actions of this renowned warrior. It has been admitted that the enterprises undertaken by Cortes, subsequently to that of the conquest of Mexico, were, for the most part, unsuccessful. This statement, however, must be understood with a certain limitation. Cortes was a great discoverer as well as a great conqueror. But some of his most important discoveries, such as that of Guatemala and New Galicia, were inevitably worked out by the captains whom he sent forth; and it is much to be noticed that this discovery by deputy, whether made on the instance and at the expense of the King of Spain, or of his Governors in the Indies, or of private individuals, was seldom or ever beneficial to the suggesters and providers of the expedition who stayed at home. Conquest and discovery in the

New World were not things that could be done by deputy—that is, at least, with any advantage to the deputing persons. This impressed an appearance of failure upon their doings, although in many instances, and especially in that of Cortes, the devising of the enterprise was the result of much boldness, skill, ingenuity and knowledge.

It has been necessary to bring before the reader the efforts of Cortes in the direction of new discovery and of new conquest, otherwise his life might almost seem to have been barren of enterprise and to have been an active life only during that year in which he conquered Mexico. But he was always busy in great enterprises. Besides those that have been recorded here in some detail, he sent ships to discover the Spice Islands, to find out a new way to China, and to ascertain whether there was any communication by sea between the Atlantic and the Pacific. When Pizarro was in great straits in Peru, Cortes did not fail to send assistance to his brother conqueror.*

* Cortes sent Rodrigo de Grijalva from new Spain in a ship of his own, with a large supply of arms, armour, and clothing.

Men who afterwards distinguished themselves much in conquest and in government had been the lieutenants of Cortes; and, in short, at whatever point you take up the history of the Indies, during the life of the great Marquis, you generally find that he was in some way or other concerned in what was going on. In truth the lives of Las Casas, Cortes and Pizarro, if told in full detail, would almost exhaust the history of America of that period. I have not given the life of Cortes in this detail, because I know that men's memories and their patience of details are very limited things, and that to recount a number of abortive enterprises, or enterprises that were hereafter carried into fulfilment by other discoverers and conquerors, would only perplex the reader and lead him away from the contemplation of the main events in the life of Cortes.

Still, in justice to this great man, it must not be forgotten that his life was full to the brim of anxious labour; and that the conquest of Mexico was but one, though the most notable, of the many enterprises which he undertook. Whether he was ill or well, I have good reason for thinking that no day passed in the life of Cortes which was

not largely occupied in designing great things, and in making preparations to fulfil these great designs.

Amongst all modern histories I think the Mexican, if it were thoroughly known to the world, would be considered to be one of the most interesting. If we take an individual Mexican of the higher and more cultivated class at the time of the conquest, he was perhaps one of the most extraordinary beings that the world has ever seen. He was full of knowledge; he was accomplished in art. Mere cleverness and skill in the arts of living had been carried to the highest extent by his people. He was even a most refined person. The prayers of the Mexicans are among the most beautiful prayers, as far as we know, that have ever been offered up by man. At the same time this cultivated, this accomplished, this pious man was the victim of as degrading a superstition as ever enslaved and brutalized mankind. To justify the assertion made above as to the beauty of the Mexican prayers, an assertion which may naturally appear to be one requiring some proof, I will subjoin the prayer of a Mexican priest, called a satrap, after hearing the confession of a penitent.

"Our Lord most gracious, the defender and favourer of all; you have just heard the confession of this poor sinner, in which he has made known in your presence his rottenness and filthiness." The satrap then went on to say, in words which I shall abridge, that the sinner might have concealed some of his sins, in which case dire will be his punishment; but perchance he has spoken the whole truth, and now feels "dolour and discontent" for all that is past, and firm resolve never to sin more. Then the satrap* said, "I speak in presence of your Majesty, who knowest all things, and knowest that this poor wretch did not sin with entire liberty of free will, but was helped and inclined to it by the natural condition

Mexican prayer after confession.

Mexican prayers after confession.

* I keep the word "satrap," as it is used in the original, and may give a clue to the Mexican word which it represents. "Satrap," in the middle ages, had a signification it has since lost. "Chartam Æthelredi Regis Angl. post Duces subscribunt aliquot viri nobiles, cum hoc titulo, *Satrapa Regis*. Quæ appellatio eadem est forte quæ *Ministri*. Vide in hac voce. (S. BERNARDUS *de Consid.* lib. iv. Quid illud sit dicam, et non proderit. Cur? quia non placebit Satrapis, plus majestati quam veritati faventibus.")—DUCANGE, *Gloss.* "Satrapa."

of the sign under which he was born. And since it is so, O most gracious Lord, defender and favourer of all men, even if this poor man has grievously offended against you, peradventure will you not cause your anger and your indignation to depart from him?" Continuing in this strain, the satrap besought pardon and remission of sins, a thing which descends from heaven as clearest and purest water," with which, "your Majesty," he said, "washes away and purifies all the stains and filthiness which sins cause in the soul" (*todas las mancillas, y suciedades, que los pecados causan en el ánima*).

The satrap addressed the penitent, and told him that he had come to a place of much danger and labour and dread, where there is a ravine from which no one who had once fallen in could make his escape; also, he had come to a place where snares and nets are set one with another, and one over against another. All this is said metaphorically of the world and of sin. The satrap proceeded to speak of the judgment to come in another world, and of the lake of miseries and intolerable torments. "But now, here you are," he said to the penitent, "and the time is arrived

in which you have had pity on yourself to speak with our Lord, who sees the secrets of hearts." And then the satrap told the penitent there was a new birth for him, but he must look to his ways well, and see that he sinned no more. Finally, he must cleanse his house * and himself, and seek a slave to sacrifice before God (there is the blot on the whole proceeding), and he must work a year or more in the house of God, and undergo penitential exercises, piercing his tongue for the injurious words it had uttered; and he must give in charity even to the depriving of himself of sustenance: "for look," said the satrap, speaking of the poor, "their flesh is as thy flesh, and they are men as thou art, especially the sick, for they are the image of God. There is no more to say

* In reference to this cleansing of the house, the exhortation is as follows :—"Carefully cleanse and preserve thy house, and thou wilt often meet that most gracious youth who ever goes through our houses, and through our districts, comforting and recreating, and works, seeking his friends to console them, and be consoled with them." This is said entirely in a spiritual sense, for the prayer has just declared that God is "invisible and impalpable." — AGLIO, *Antiquities of Mexico.* KINGSBOROUGH'S *Collection*, vol. v. p. 370.

to thee; go in peace; and I pray God that he may help thee to perform that which thou art bound to do, for he is gracious to all men."*

There is another prayer which also is one that must raise our opinion of the thoughtfulness of the Mexicans in the construction of their prayers.

Mexican prayer of a new king.

It is the prayer of a king, or governor, upon his election, in which, after celebrating the greatness of God (this also is addressed to Tezcatlipuk), and debasing himself before Him, saying that he deserves blindness of his eyes and crushing of his body (a confession which many rulers might make after they have had the government), he goes on to say, that he it is who requires to be governed, and that the Lord must know many to whom he could confide this charge of government; but since "you are determined," he says, "to put me forward as an object of scandal and laughter for the world, let your will be done. Peradventure,"

---

* "Mira que su carne és como la tuya, y que son hombres como tu; mayormente á los enfermos porque son imágen de Dios. No hay mas que te decir; vete en paz, y ruego á Dios que te ayude á cumplir lo que eres obligado á hacer, pues que el favorece á todos."—KINGSBOROUGH'S *Collection*, vol. v. p. 371.

he exclaims, "you do not know who I am. After that you know what person I am, you will seek another, depriving me of the government, being weary of enduring me. Perchance," he adds, "it is a dream, or as when one rises from his bed in his sleep, this thing which has happened to me." The prayer then proceeds, as the prayer of a ruler naturally would do, against war and against pestilence, and speaks of former rulers, and, if I understand it rightly, of their joys and privileges in heaven; and then he comes to speak of his own inferiority, how he has no possibility of ruling himself, how he is in darkness, how he is a heap of refuse in a corner. "Be gracious, therefore, O Lord," he exclaims, "and give me a little light, if it be no more than so much as a glow-worm, which moves by night, throws out from itself, that I may find my way in this dream and this sleep of life, which lasts as a day, where there are many occasions for stumbling, and many things to give occasion for laughter, and other things that are as a rugged road, which have to be passed by leaping."*

* "Tened por bien, Señor, de me dar un poquito de

Mexican prayer of a new king.

He concludes by saying, "Our Lord most gracious, you have made me sit in your seat and be your instrument of voice (*vuestra flauta*)* without any desert of my own;" and afterwards he adds, "Although I am a poor creature, I wish to say that unworthily I am your image, and represent your person, and the words which I shall speak have to be held as your words, and my countenance to be esteemed as your countenance, and my hearing as your hearing, and the punishments that I shall ordain have to be considered as if you ordained them; wherefore, I pray you, put within me your spirit and your words, that all may obey, and that none may be able to contradict."†

---

lumbre, aunque no sea mas de quanto echa de si una lucerna que anda de noche, para ir en este sueño y en esta vida dormida que dura como espacio de un dia, donde hay muchas cosas en que tropezar, y muchas cosas en que dar ocasion de reir; y otras cosas que son como camino fragoso, que se han de pasar saltando."—KINGSBOROUGH'S *Coll.*, vol. v. p. 379.

* The force of this expression will be understood when an account is given of Tezcatlipuk's festival, in which a flute was sounded at certain intervals.

† A doubt will occur to many minds as to how these

After reading the above, the reader must feel sympathy with the Mexican; but he cannot also help feeling sympathy with his great conqueror, who had entered the hideous temples of Mexico and had seen piled up there the skulls of one hundred and thirty-six thousand victims, and who was resolved to introduce Christianity in the place of this most hideous and degrading superstition.

Let us not part from Cortes while thinking of him only as an unsuccessful man, immersed in lawsuits, made little of by the rulers of Spain,

---

long prayers were retained in the memory of the Mexicans, whose means of writing with exactitude were, comparatively speaking, limited. The same doubt occurred to the celebrated Acosta three hundred years ago, and he expressed it to one who was able to satisfy him. In the original manuscript of Juan de Tovar, possessed by Sir Thomas Phillips, Bart., of Middle Hill, the letter of Acosta and the answer of Tovar are given. "Pero, para conservarlos por las mismas palabras, que los dixeron sus oradores y poetas, avya cada dia exercicio dello, en los colegios de los mozos principales, que avyan de ser sucesores á estos, y con la contínua repeticion, se les quedava en la memoria, sin discrepar palabra, tomando las oraciones mas famosas, que en cada tiempo se hazian por método, para imponer á los mozos, que avyan de ser retóricos, y de esta suerte se conser-

and in the decadence of his powers and his hopes; but as the mighty conqueror of one of the most compact and well-ordered barbaric nations of the world—a conqueror who with a few hundreds of his fellow countrymen, not all of them his partizans, overcame hundreds of thousands of fanatic and resolute men fighting against him with immense resources, and with a resolution nearly equal to his own. Let us give him the benefit of his sincere belief in Christianity, and his determination to substitute that beneficent religion for the hideous and cruel superstition of the people he was resolved to conquer. And let us echo the wish of that good common soldier, Bernal Diaz, who, though having his grievances against Cortes, as all the other *Conquistadores* thought they had, could yet, after watching every turn in the fortunes of the great Marquis, and knowing almost

---

varon muchos parlamentos, sin discrepar palabra, de gente en gente, hasta que vinieron los Españoles, que en nostra letra escrivieron muchas oraciones, y cantares, que yo vi, y assí se han conservado. Y con esto queda respondido á la última pregunta, de 'Cómo era possible tener estos memoria de las palabras,' etc."—JUAN DE TOVAR, *Historia de los Indios Mexicanos*, MS.

every sin that he had committed, write most tenderly of the great captain whose plume he had so often followed to victory.

After saying that subsequently to the conquest of Mexico Cortes had not had good fortune either in his Californian or his Honduras expeditions, or indeed in anything else he had undertaken, Bernal Diaz adds, "Perhaps it was that he might have felicity in heaven. And I believe it was so, for he was an honourable cavalier, and a devoted worshipper of the Virgin, the Apostle St. Peter, and other Saints. May God pardon his sins, and mine too, and give me a righteous ending, which things are of more concern than the conquests and victories that we had over the Indians."

THE END.

CHISWICK PRESS:—PRINTED BY WHITTINGHAM AND WILKINS,
TOOKS COURT, CHANCERY LANE.

00022822

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 18 July, 2018